

Update on number of dengue fever cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 21) reported the latest number of cases of dengue fever (DF), and strongly urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From June 14 to 20, the CHP recorded seven imported DF cases. The patients had been to Cambodia (one case), India (one case), Maldives (one case), Nepal (one case), the Philippines (one case) and Thailand (two cases, including one case epidemiologically linked to a case recorded last week) during the incubation period.

As of yesterday (June 20), 65 cases had been recorded this year, all of which were imported. The cases were mainly imported from Thailand (14), Indonesia (11) and Malaysia (11).

The CHP has been closely monitoring the latest DF situation in neighbouring and overseas areas. DF is endemic in many tropical and subtropical areas of the world. According to the World Health Organization, some Asian countries are experiencing unusually high numbers of DF cases for this time of year. The number of cases in several countries including Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam was about two to three times the number for the same period in 2018.

According to the announcement of the Health Commission of Guangdong Province on June 13, the epidemic season of DF started early this year in Guangdong. As of June 12, 240 cases have been recorded in Guangdong this year, which was significantly higher than that in the same period last year (44 cases). In Taiwan, 196 cases (including 22 local cases) have been recorded in 2019 (as of June 20).

Detailed information on the latest DF situation in Hong Kong as well as neighbouring and overseas countries and areas this year is uploaded to the CHP's website

(www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf).

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control at all times:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;
- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;

- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing loose, light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or exposed parts of the body when doing outdoor activities.

Members of the public must adopt personal protective measures against mosquitoes to prevent mosquito-borne diseases such as DF when visiting affected countries/areas. To reduce the risk of infections spread by mosquitoes, apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from areas affected by DF and Zika virus infection should apply insect repellent for 14 days or at least 21 days respectively upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor. DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public may refer to the CHP's [tips for using insect repellents](#) for details.

Enhancement to currency conversion arrangement under Stock Connect

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) issued guidance today (June 21) regarding the currency conversion arrangement under the Northbound trading of Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect and Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect (Stock Connect).

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Norman Chan, said, "with the support

of the People's Bank of China, investors under the Northbound trading of Stock Connect may, for the first time, obtain Renminbi (RMB) and conduct the related foreign exchange hedging based on the onshore exchange rate through the relevant Hong Kong banks. As major international financial market indices continue to include A-shares or increase weights assigned to them, the enhanced currency conversion arrangement will offer more diversified choices to investors, and increase the convenience and attractiveness of Stock Connect, thereby reinforcing Hong Kong's role as the intermediary for capital flowing into and out of the Mainland."

Currently, investors investing in the Mainland stock markets through the Northbound trading of Stock Connect have to settle their transactions in offshore RMB. The enhanced arrangement aims to provide investors an additional choice to obtain RMB and conduct the related foreign exchange hedging based on the onshore exchange rate for their underlying Northbound Stock Connect transactions. Investors may access the service from designated Hong Kong banks through relevant securities companies and brokers. The said banks may square the relevant positions in the onshore foreign exchange market.

Estimated public rental housing allocation for 2019-20

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) today (June 21) approved the estimated public rental housing (PRH) allocation for 2019-20. The Committee was also briefed on the actual allocation in 2018-19.

For the year of 2018-19, it was originally estimated that 34 800 flats could be allocated. The actual allocation was 34 679 flats (i.e. the number of housing offers accepted and flats taken up by applicants in or before March 2019), achieving a target rate of 99.7 per cent.

In 2019-20, it is estimated that a total of about 24 100 PRH flats, comprising about 10 500 new flats and about 13 600 refurbished flats, will be available for allocating to different categories of applicants. Among them, the largest portion will go to PRH applicants with about 16 870 flats (70 per cent) to be allocated to them.

"In the past five years, from 2014-15 to 2018-19, the average annual actual allocation of public housing flats was about 26 800, similar to the 2019-20 estimation," a spokesman for the HA said.

"The 2019-20 estimation is not an upper limit. We will endeavour to allocate more than the estimated number of flats to PRH applicants within the year if possible, such as in the event that any new PRH estate is completed ahead of schedule.

"We will also closely monitor the actual allocation figures of other categories to ensure any surplus of demanded flats could be allocated to PRH applicants before the close of the year."

Of the 16 870 flats, 1 687 flats are estimated to be allocated to non-elderly one-person applicants under the Quota and Points System (QPS). The number is based on the annual allocation quota for this category of applicant, which is set at 10 per cent of the total number of flats to be allocated to PRH applicants, subject to a cap of 2 200 flats.

"If the actual supply of PRH flats turns out to be less than estimated, we will keep the number of flats allocated to QPS applicants to not more than 10 per cent of the total number of flats to be allocated to PRH applicants," the spokesman said.

Apart from the category of PRH applicants, 2 000 flats will be reserved for Compassionate Rehousing in 2019-20.

"This figure is not an upper limit, and where resources permit we will follow the established policy to handle all demands for rehousing as recommended by the Social Welfare Department," the spokesman said.

It is estimated that a total of 840 flats will be reserved for the category of clearance rehousing residents affected by clearance projects planned by different departments, including development and clearance exercises in Wang Chau and Kwu Tung North/Fanling North New Development Areas and the Urban Renewal Authority's redevelopment projects.

Moreover, an estimated number of 3 300 flats will be set aside for various transfer purposes, including the transfer of under-occupation households, transfer of elderly under-occupation households on full rent exemption, the Territory-wide Overcrowding Relief Transfer Exercise and the Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme, and special transfer for individual tenants on medical and/or social grounds.

"Following the completion of the arrangement for increasing the quota for the Civil Service Public Housing Quota Scheme for four consecutive years from 2015-16 to 2018-19, the quota for this category is reverted back to about 1 000 flats in 2019-20," the spokesman said.

"We will closely monitor any changes in the circumstances and will remain flexible in the allocation of PRH flats to ensure optimisation of resources," he added.

(Please refer to the attached table on the breakdown of estimated allocation for different categories of applicants in 2019-20.)

HA approves initiatives for efficient use of public housing resources

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) will implement a trial scheme whereby under-occupation households residing in the HA's public rental housing (PRH) estates, whose family members are all aged 70 or above, are allowed to enjoy full rent exemption upon transfer to other PRH flats of suitable sizes.

To allow for more efficient use of public housing resources, the Policy Address 2018 suggested that the HA consider launching the new initiative. The Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) of the HA approved the trial scheme at its meeting today (June 21). The HA will allocate 300 PRH flats for the trial scheme on a first-come, first-served basis for a period of one year. Eligible applicants will be given a maximum of three housing offers of either a new or refurbished flat with the provision of Domestic Removal Allowance. The trial scheme will be implemented in the latter half of this year.

The Policy Address 2018 also announced that the Government had accepted the Hong Kong Housing Society (HS)'s recommendation of launching the Flat for Flat Pilot Scheme for Elderly Owners (Pilot Scheme). Under the Pilot Scheme, owners aged 60 or above who have owned their flats under the Flat-for-Sale Scheme of the HS for at least 10 years can sell their original flat and then buy a smaller flat in the Secondary Market without payment of premium.

The SHC at the meeting today approved allowing eligible elderly owners of the HS' Pilot Scheme to purchase subsidised sale flats (SSFs) in the Secondary Market administered by the HA.

Allowing these owners to purchase a smaller SSF in either the Secondary Market of the HA or the HS will provide them with a wider choice and enhance the attractiveness of the Pilot Scheme. This is conducive to meeting the objective of the Pilot Scheme and enables the HS to fully test out the "trade-down" concept.

Under the existing policy, persons who have purchased a flat under any SSF scheme administered by the HA, the HS or the Urban Renewal Authority are barred for life from purchasing another SSF.

The HS plans to launch the Pilot Scheme and invite applications in the second half of 2019.

999 hotline service affected (2)

As the Police Headquarters was surrounded by protestors with roads obstructed in the vicinity, a total of 43 calls of 999 hotline in Wan Chai Division could not be immediately handled as at 5.30pm today (June 21). Extra resources were deployed and Police service of Wan Chai Division was delayed as a result. Police hereby appeal to all to leave the scene as soon as possible so that the normal operation of 999 service can be resumed.