

Update on food poisoning outbreak related to food premises in Kowloon Bay

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 16) reported an update on its investigations into an outbreak of food poisoning related to a food premises in Kowloon Bay announced on November 13.

After further investigations, the CHP identified an additional 38 persons, comprising 12 men and 26 women aged from 19 to 62, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, vomiting and fever about two to 31 hours after having a dinner banquet at the food premises on November 9. Twenty of them sought medical attention but none required hospitalisation.

This brings the total number of persons affected to 48 so far, comprising 19 men and 29 women. The stool specimen of one patient tested positive for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*. All affected persons identified have been in stable condition.

"Epidemiological investigations show that the additional affected persons had a meal at the food premises concerned before investigation and control measures instituted by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). We have alerted the FEHD to the updated investigation findings and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

To prevent food-borne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out:

- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.

Meetings of Legislative Council and its Committees

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

The Legislative Council (LegCo) and its Committees will hold 13 open meetings and three closed meetings during the week from November 19 to 23 in the LegCo Complex. Details of the meetings are available in the meeting schedule attached.

The information in the meeting schedule is subject to change. Please refer to the "LegCo Calendar" on the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk) for the latest details of meetings.

Members of the public are welcome to observe open meetings of LegCo and its Committees. Interested individuals and groups are advised to make advance booking of seats by calling the LegCo Secretariat at 3919 3399 during office hours. Members of the public can also listen to or watch all open meetings via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website.

Twelve immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations, including an operation codenamed "Twilight", and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Labour Department codenamed "Champion" from November 12 to 15. A total of nine illegal workers and three suspected employers were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 21 target locations including commercial buildings, a dog shelter, a farm, residential flats, restaurants and a shopping mall. Eight illegal workers and two employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised five men and three women, aged 34 to 58. Among them, a woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. In addition, two women were suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Meanwhile, one man and one woman, aged 36 and 45, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

In addition, during operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided four target locations in Sha Tin including a shop and restaurants. A female

illegal worker, aged 39, was arrested. Meanwhile, one woman, aged 50, was suspected of employing the illegal worker and she was also arrested.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical

services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Update on number of dengue fever cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 16) reported the latest number of cases of dengue fever (DF), and again urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From November 9 to 15, the CHP recorded four imported DF cases. The patients had been to Cambodia (one case), Guangdong in Mainland China (one case), the Philippines (one case) and Thailand (one case) during the incubation period.

As of yesterday (November 15), 145 cases had been confirmed this year, of which 29 were local cases and 116 were imported cases. The imported cases were mainly from Thailand (33), Mainland China (25) and the Philippines (18).

DF remains endemic in some areas of Asia and beyond. The latest figures for 2018 revealed that 73 679 cases had been recorded in Thailand, 2 539 in Singapore (since December 31, 2017) and 165 in Japan. In Taiwan, 176 local cases have been recorded to date in 2018. In the Americas, the latest figures indicated that 218 337 and 62 404 cases have been filed in Brazil and Mexico respectively in 2018.

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

- 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 light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

To reduce the risk of infections spread by mosquitoes, apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from affected areas should apply insect repellent for 14 days (DF) or at least 21 days (Zika Virus Infection) 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.

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for August – October 2018

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for August – October 2018) released today (November 16) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.8% in August – October 2018, same as that in July – September 2018. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.2% in the two periods.

Comparing August – October 2018 with July – September 2018, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment decreased by around 2 000 from 3 874 600 in July – September 2018 to 3 872 600 in August – October 2018. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 3 800 from 3 992 400 to 3 988 600.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 1 800 from 117 800 in July – September 2018 to 116 000 in August – October 2018. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also

decreased by around 600 from 47 300 to 46 700.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said, "The labour market remained tight in August – October 2018, with the unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate staying unchanged at 2.8% and 1.2% respectively. Total employment grew solidly on a year-on-year basis."

"When compared to the preceding three-month period, movements in unemployment rates varied across sectors, but were generally small in magnitude. The unemployment situation in most of the major service sectors continued to improve on a year-on-year basis, notably in the accommodation services sector amid the buoyant performance of inbound tourism."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market is expected to stay tight in the near term. Yet, the employment outlook beyond the near term will hinge on how the increased external headwinds will affect the local economy going forward. The Government will stay vigilant and monitor the situation closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) has adopted a series of on-going measures to promote the employment of elderly persons, including setting up special counters at job centres to provide priority registration and job referral services for elderly job seekers, organise tailor-made employment briefings for the elderly, setting up a dedicated webpage for elderly job seekers on the Interactive Employment Service website and enhancing the functions of the vacancy search terminals to facilitate their access to employment information and search for suitable vacancies.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD organised the Job Fair for Middle-aged and Elderly Employment on November 15 and 16 at the Dragon Centre in Sham Shui Po. 44 employers participated and offered about 4 200 vacancies suitable for middle-aged and elderly job seekers. Moreover, the LD will organise the North District Recruitment and Training Expo on January 4, 2019 at Wo Hing Sports Centre in Fanling. In addition, industry-based or district-based job fairs are regularly organised at the LD's industry-based recruitment centres and job centres located across the territory.

Further information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

The survey for August – October 2018 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 74 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and

underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the publication contains statistics for the quarter April – June 2018 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2018 will be available by end November 2018. Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the Household Statistics Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).