

# Public urged to keep up anti-mosquito efforts

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (March 17) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* (MGI) for February rose slightly to 0.2 per cent from 0.1 per cent in January. The index remains lowest at Level 1, indicating that mosquito infestation in the areas surveyed was not extensive.

Among the 64 survey areas, no area was recorded with gravidtrap indices exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent. Moreover, the monthly density index for *Aedes albopictus* (MDI) in February remained at 1 as in January, which represented that an average of one *Aedes albopictus* adult was found in the *Aedes*-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult *Aedes albopictus* was not high in the areas surveyed. The FEHD reminded the public that despite the index remaining at a low level, the department appealed to the public to carry out early effective preventive measures against mosquito breeding as the warm and humid weather of spring is favourable for mosquito breeding.

As for the port areas, the port monthly gravidtrap index in February remained at 0.02 per cent as in January, while the port monthly density index in February was 1 as in January.

"The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue to intensify mosquito prevention and control work covering venues under their purview and strengthen publicity and education. The FEHD will conduct a three-phase territory-wide Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The first phase, lasting for four weeks, has launched on February 22 and will run until March 19. During the period, mosquito prevention and control work will be enhanced by the FEHD and relevant government departments. They will target areas which have drawn particular concern, such as locations in close proximity to human residences, parks, schools, construction sites, public housing estates, hospitals, illegal cultivation sites, waterfront public and private cargo working areas, cross boundary check points, typhoon shelters and cross boundary ferry terminals to remove the accumulation of water and to carry out mosquito prevention and control work. The FEHD will, after the first and second phases of the campaign, conduct territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control special operations so as to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign," a spokesman for the FEHD said.

The area gravidtrap index (AGI) and the area density index (ADI) indicate the extensiveness of distribution and the density of *Aedine* mosquitoes respectively in that particular survey area, while the MGI and the MDI are enumerated by pooling together all AGIs and ADIs of the same month, which reflect the general situation of *Aedes albopictus* in all survey areas. The gravidtrap and density indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different areas and information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on

the department's website at [www.fehd.gov.hk](http://www.fehd.gov.hk).

The spokesman said, "Aedes albopictus is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) as well as Zika virus infection. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. As Hong Kong has recorded one local DF case last year and the dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high, 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 should stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures."

The spokesman added that as Aedes albopictus breeds in small water bodies, members of the public should carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing the water in vases and scrubbing the inner surfaces, 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 to prevent accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

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.

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## **Gazettal of Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021**

The Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 will be gazetted on March 19.

The Bill seeks to implement four areas of amendments to the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112), namely the tax treatment for amalgamation of companies under the court-free procedures as provided for under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622); the tax treatment for transfer or succession of specified assets under certain circumstances; refining the statutory framework for the furnishing of tax returns; and enhancing the foreign tax deduction regime.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on March 24.

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## LCQ5: News reporting of RTHK

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (March 17):

Question:

From January 23 to 24 this year, the Government set up a "restricted area" in Jordan, arranged for persons within the area to take a test for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 and distributed to each of them a food pack which contained four cans of canned food of different types (three of which were cans with easy-to-open covers). Those persons staying in the guesthouses within the area (including journalists) were also distributed food packs. A news report of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) pointed out that "no can opener nor cooking implement is provided in the guesthouse", and attached a photo of a food pack in which none of the cans showed the side with a ring pull. Some members of the public have criticized that the photo, by wilfully hiding the ring pulls of the cans, misled readers into thinking that all the cans could only be opened with a can opener. RTHK issued a statement, countering the criticisms as smear accusations which it severely condemned, and insisting that the news report had stated the facts. However, a newspaper which had published a similar photo subsequently issued a statement, in which it stated that the photo concerned had been removed as the photo was misleading, admitted its oversight and made an apology. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has requested RTHK to conduct a review and submit a report on the practices adopted in the news report; if so, of the progress of the review, and whether it will submit the report to this Council; and

(2) whether RTHK issued the aforesaid statement after obtaining the approval of the then Director of Broadcasting (D of B); if so, whether the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development has requested an explanation from D of B; if so, of the justifications for giving the approval; if no approval had been obtained, whether RTHK has reviewed if the contents of the statement were appropriate; if it has, of the review outcome; if it has not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

On January 23 this year, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) reported on the setting up of a "restricted area" in Jordan by the Government in response to the epidemic. The news report mentioned the time of condoning off, arrangements for compulsory testing, and the types and quantity of supplies distributed to people inside the condoned area. It was also stated that

neither can openers nor cooking utensils were provided in the guesthouse. A photo attached to the report showed only the bottom of four cans along with other goods, without mentioning whether any such cans were equipped with pull-open tabs.

The report has aroused public concern and there were views that the public would be misled by the news report into believing that some supplies distributed could not be used. With prior agreement of the then Director of Broadcasting, RTHK issued a statement on January 25 that it strongly condemned such smearing views, and reiterated that the news report had stated the facts. As at end-February, RTHK received a total of 548 complaints about the report.

In view of widespread public concern over the report, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) has sought to gain an understanding from RTHK and requested it to handle the complaints seriously, including a review of the causes of the concern, the possibility of providing readers with more information and a more comprehensive coverage of facts at that time, so as to avoid misunderstanding and bias, or even queries about the objectivity of the report.

As a public service broadcaster and a government department, RTHK will always be accountable to society. While it is natural that there are different views on its news reports, RTHK should respond to public criticisms in a more positive and proactive manner. In order to uphold the highest professional standards of journalism as pledged in the Charter of RTHK, RTHK should first look into complaints objectively and on the basis of facts, make timely clarifications to the public, listen humbly to different views and try to better itself where there is room for improvement. RTHK should learn from experience gained in the handling of this case.

Over the past half year, CEDB has conducted an in-depth review of and made recommendations on the governance and management of RTHK. A Review Report was released in February. The Review Report pointed out that there are major deficiencies in RTHK's mechanisms for editorial management and complaints handling. RTHK will seriously follow up the recommendations of the Review Report. In the process, RTHK should seek advice from the RTHK Board of Advisors and other stakeholders. CEDB will monitor RTHK's follow-up work.

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**[SJ and SED visit Community Vaccination Centre at Education Bureau Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre \(with](#)**

## photos)

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, and the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, today (March 17) visited the Community Vaccination Centre (CVC) at Education Bureau Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre to inspect its operation and to give encouragement to the staff members.

Ms Cheng and Mr Yeung were briefed by the centre supervisor on the operation of the CVC, and took the opportunity to chat with the healthcare personnel and staff members working there. They were pleased to note that the CVC, operated by the Hospital Authority, had been operating smoothly, and that the response to the vaccination arrangements has been positive.

Ms Cheng and Mr Yeung expressed their gratitude to all the healthcare personnel and staff members there for helping the Government vaccinate members of the public. They also called on members of the public in the priority groups of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme to be vaccinated early for the protection of themselves and others.



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**LCQ20: Residential care homes for**

# elderly

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (March 17):

Question:

Quite a number of members of the public have relayed that the waiting time for admission to subsidised residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) has become longer and longer due to the persistent shortage of the places therein, and carers taking care of elderly persons single-handedly at home bear tremendous pressure. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of elderly persons currently waiting for admission to subsidised RCHEs and the average waiting time; the new measures to be put in place in the coming three years to shorten the waiting time;

(2) given that where developers are willing to incorporate certain lease conditions in their real estate development projects to ensure the provision of eligible RCHE premises, they may apply for exemption from payment of premiums for the premises concerned under the "Scheme to Encourage Provision of RCHE Premises in New Private Developments", of the respective numbers of relevant applications received, approved and rejected by the Government since the Scheme was launched in 2003; if there were rejected applications, of the reasons for that; whether it will consider relaxing the eligibility criteria and streamlining the application procedure, so as to encourage developers to participate in the Scheme;

(3) of the total number of applications received by the Government in the past 10 years for exemption from payment of premiums in respect of the construction of private RCHEs that meet the requirements of the Social Welfare Department; and

(4) given that in order to protect the safety of elderly residents in the event of emergencies, it is stipulated in section 20 of the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation (Cap. 459A) that all parts of a residential care home shall be situated at a height not more than 24 metres above the ground floor, but the Director of Social Welfare may authorise any part of the residential care home to be exempted from complying with such height restriction, of the respective numbers of exemption applications received and approved by the Director in the past 10 years, which had been made for the following purpose: to accommodate non-domestic portions such as the laundry room, kitchen and storeroom at a height more than 24 metres above the ground floor, so as to release more space on the lower floors for the provision of places for the elderly?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) As at end-December 2020, the waiting time and number of people waitlisted for subsidised care and attention (C&A) places and nursing home (NH) places are as follows:

Service type	Average waiting time (in months) (Average of the previous 3 months) (Note 1)	No. of people waitlisted
C&A places	21	31 426 (Note 2)
NH places	26	6 099 (Note 3)

Note 1: It is the average number of months taken (from the waitlist date to the admission date) for normal cases to be admitted to subsidised Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (RCHEs) in the past three months. Cases accorded priority in allocation of places, cases with inactive history admitted in the past three months, and cases transferred from homes for the aged places to the converted C&A places providing a continuum of care in the same RCHE have been excluded in the calculation because their waiting time may be extraordinarily long or short in comparison with that of normal cases.

Note 2: The figure includes the elderly persons using subsidised community care services (CCS) while waiting for subsidised C&A places, but does not include the elderly persons classified as "inactive" cases on the Central Waiting List (CWL).

Note 3: The figure includes the elderly persons using subsidised CCS while waiting for subsidised NH places, but does not include the elderly persons classified as "inactive" cases on the CWL.

The Government will continue to take a multi-pronged approach to increase elderly service places through long, medium and short-term strategies. As a long-term strategy, the Government has reinstated the population-based planning ratio in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines in respect of elderly facilities in late 2018, specifying a ratio of 21.3 subsidised RCHE places to 1 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above. This is to set a clear service provision target for future planning work. As regards the medium-term strategy, the Government is taking forward 66 development projects which will provide about 8 800 RCHE places (including subsidised and non-subsidised places) and about 2 800 subsidised day care service place in the coming few years. Besides, in accordance with the 2020 Policy Address, the Government has invited the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society to explore reserving about 5 per cent of the total domestic gross floor area in future public housing development projects exclusively for welfare uses, which include the much-needed RCHEs, without affecting the public housing supply and other ancillary facilities.

In respect of short-term strategies, the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher (RCSV) for the Elderly has been implemented since March 2017 in order to issue a maximum of 3 000 RCSVs in batches, offering elderly persons in need of residential care service an additional choice. In addition, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will purchase an additional 5 000 EA1 places in private RCHEs under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme over five years starting from 2019-20 to increase the supply of subsidised RCHE places and enhance the overall service quality of private RCHEs.

Apart from the aforesaid measures, the Labour and Welfare Bureau will continue to implement the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Sites Scheme) with a view to encouraging non-governmental organisations to better utilise their own sites through expansion, redevelopment or new development to provide diversified subvented and self-financing services. According to the latest proposals from applicant organisations in Phase 1 of the Special Sites Scheme, it is anticipated that about 7 500 RCHE places (including subsidised and non-subsidised places) could be provided subject to the smooth implementation of all the proposed projects relating to elderly services. The Government also launched a new phase of the Special Sites Scheme in April 2019. The SWD is discussing with the applicant organisations to finalise details of their proposals such as service type, number of places, development parameters and project cost, with a view to implementing the projects as soon as possible.

(2) and (3) The Government implemented in July 2003 a scheme to encourage provision of RCHE premises in new private developments (the Scheme). The Scheme provides that eligible RCHE premises will be exempted from payment of premium under different types of land transactions including lease modification, land exchange and private treaty grant, if the developers are willing to accept incorporation of certain lease conditions to ensure the provision of RCHE premises. Premium exemption will be granted with the support of relevant departments (including the SWD). The developers will have to bear the construction cost of the RCHE premises which, once built, will become the properties of the developers. The Government will allow the developers to lease, sell or operate the premises themselves or through agencies as long as the premises remain as RCHEs. The developers/ operators are free to set their own fees having regard to the market trend.

Since the implementation of the Scheme, one project in Tuen Mun has received premium exemption. Construction and furnishing of the RCHE premises have been completed, while the application for RCHE licence is in progress. The SWD has also received other preliminary proposals submitted by interested developers/ applicants referred by the Lands Department or the Planning Department. Whether the projects can be realised is subject to various considerations and factors to be taken into account by individual developers/ applicants in the course of land transaction.

(4) RCHEs are regulated under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation (the Regulation). According to section 20(1) of the Regulation, subject to section 20(2), no part of an RCHE shall be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground floor. This requirement is a safety consideration for elderly residents as many of them are wheelchair-bound or

even bed-ridden. In the event of fire or other emergencies, they need extensive assistance to evacuate. The difficulty of fire personnel and other rescue teams in evacuating a large number of frail elderly persons with mobility problems to the ground floor cannot be neglected. Therefore, stipulating a height restriction for RCHEs helps protecting the safety of elderly residents in the event of fire or other emergencies as well as effectively shortening the time for fire personnel to rescue or evacuate residents.

Currently, under section 20(2) of the Regulation, the Director of Social Welfare may, by notice in writing served on an operator, authorise that any part of such RCHE may be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground floor as may be indicated in the notice. In the past 10 years, the SWD has not received any applications made pursuant to the above provision.