

HKCH announces on a case of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding a patient infected with rat Hepatitis E Virus, the spokesperson for Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) made the following announcement today (January 10):

HKCH reported to the Centre for Health Protection that a patient's blood specimens were tested positive for rat Hepatitis E Virus. The concerned patient was admitted to the hospital in August 2019 and succumbed on December 27.

As the patient had been admitted to the hospital during the incubation period, the hospital will support the Centre for Health Protection in the epidemiological investigation. The hospital will also explore to refer the case to the coroner for follow up.

Government responds to enquiries on National Anthem Bill

In response to media enquiries on the National Anthem Bill, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government said today (January 10) that it is the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR Government to implement the Law of the People's Republic of China on National Anthem (National Anthem Law) locally. In implementing the National Anthem Law by local legislation, the Government has given full consideration to Hong Kong's common law system and actual circumstances. The main spirit of the National Anthem Bill (the Bill) is "respect", which bears absolutely no relations to "restricting freedom of speech" as claimed by certain members of the community and definitely not a so-called "evil law".

The spokesman said, "The Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress adopted the decision to add the National Anthem Law to Annex III to the Basic Law on November 4, 2017. In accordance with Article 18 of the Basic Law, the national laws listed in Annex III to the Basic Law shall be applied locally by way of promulgation or legislation by the HKSAR. It is thus the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR Government to implement the National Anthem Law locally.

"Having regard to Hong Kong's common law system and the actual circumstances in Hong Kong, the HKSAR Government decided to implement the National Anthem Law in Hong Kong by local legislation. This approach fully reflects the spirit of 'one country, two systems'.

"The legislative principle of the National Anthem Bill is clear, i.e. to fully reflect the legislative purpose and intent of the National Anthem Law, which is to preserve the dignity of the national anthem so that members of the community would respect the national anthem, whilst taking into account Hong Kong's common law system and actual circumstances.

"During the drafting of the Bill, we have consulted the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Constitutional Affairs, and attended two special panel meetings lasting for a total of about 15 hours, during which we have listened to the views from 190 members of the public and representatives of various organisations. We have also met with different political parties, professional groups, representatives from the legal sector and the academia to listen to and adopt their views.

"The Bill was introduced to the LegCo last January for First and Second Reading. The relevant Bills Committee has subsequently convened 17 meetings and used over 50 hours to scrutinise the Bill in a clause-by-clause manner. Also, members of the public were invited to express their views at one of these meetings. In the process, the Government has listened attentively to the views of members of the Bills Committee and the public."

The spokesman emphasised that the drafting of the Bill had undergone stringent procedures during which views from various sectors of the community were gauged and adopted. The HKSAR Government will introduce the Bill to the LegCo for resuming Second Reading debate at an appropriate time.

[Transcript of remarks by CS at media session \(with video\)](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, and the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, at a media session after meeting with the new District Council members this afternoon (January 10):

Reporter: Mr Cheung, are you disappointed that so many pro-democracy councillors have boycotted this meeting? And how will you enhance the communication with them in the coming four years?

Chief Secretary for Administration: We were a bit disappointed, of course, that only 40 members turned up today. But these 40 members were very active.

In fact, 20 of them had the chance to speak up and speak from their heart, speak their mind, and we did answer them fully and satisfactorily. We had a very good exchange this afternoon including two hours of Q&A. Only 20 minutes was spent on a very brief introduction for the work of the DCs. It's a very useful, productive, I would say fertile, exchange in the first place. It's an initial exchange. We will certainly continue our dialogue, our interaction with District Councils in the months to come. OK?

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Import and sale of shellfishes **harvested in production areas 35.11** **and 35.06 in France suspended**

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 10) that the import into and sale within Hong Kong of shellfishes harvested in production areas 35.11 and 35.06 in France have been suspended with immediate effect.

â€€â€€

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS received a notification from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission that shellfishes harvested in the abovementioned areas which were suspected to be contaminated with norovirus were under recall. For the sake of prudence, the CFS has immediately suspended the import into and sale within Hong Kong of all shellfishes harvested in the two areas concerned."

â€€â€€

Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately followed up with major local importers and retailers. Preliminary investigation found that a local importer had imported not ready-to-eat mussels from the abovementioned areas into Hong Kong which were on sale in its supermarkets. For the sake of prudence, the importer concerned had already voluntarily stopped sale and removed from shelves of the affected product. The CFS is tracing the distribution of the affected product. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected product harvested in the abovementioned areas concerned immediately if they possess them.

"Shellfish (including mussels) are filter feeders which ingest food and absorb nutrients through filtering sea water. The shellfish may be contaminated with viruses if nourished with contaminated water. One may be infected by norovirus or other pathogenic microorganism if consuming undercooked shellfish which is contaminated. So, shellfish should be thoroughly cooked before consumption. Young children, elderly people, pregnant women and others with weakened immune systems should pay special attention when consuming shellfish," the spokesman said.â€€

The CFS has informed the French authorities of the import suspension and will also notify the local trade. It will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health. Investigation is ongoing.

Government issues Red Outbound Travel Alert on Iran

In view of the latest situation in Iran, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government today (January 10) issued a Red Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) on Iran.

A Government spokesman said, "Residents who intend to visit the country should adjust their travel plans and avoid non-essential travel, including leisure travel. Those already there should monitor the situation, exercise caution, attend to personal safety and avoid large gatherings of people."

The Security Bureau will closely monitor the situation there. Any update will be issued through the media and the bureau's Mobile App and OTA webpage www.sb.gov.hk/eng/ota.

Residents in Iran who need assistance may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the Immigration Department (ImmD) at (852) 1868 or contact the Chinese Embassy in Iran at the consular protection hotline: (98) 912-2176035.

Hong Kong residents are encouraged to use the online Registration of the Outbound Travel Information service (www.gov.hk/roti) of the ImmD to register their contact details and itinerary when outside Hong Kong. The information provided allows the ImmD to disseminate practical information to them through appropriate means, including SMS on mobile phones, on a timely basis when necessary.