

Hotel industry well prepared to guard against human cases of avian influenza A(H7N9)

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, inspected a hotel in Wan Chai today (April 18) to see for himself the preventive, surveillance and contingency measures against human cases of avian influenza A(H7N9) implemented by the hotel industry.

Accompanying Mr So were the Commissioner for Tourism, Mr Philip Yung, and the Executive Director of the Federation of Hong Kong Hotel Owners (FHKHO), Mr Michael Li. Some 100 members of the FHKHO own more than 90 per cent of the hotel rooms in Hong Kong.

The hotel industry has already stepped up vigilance and preparation to guard against human infection with avian influenza. The industry is also strictly following the guidelines of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health on receiving guests.

Mr So was briefed by the hotel section heads on the implementation of their preventive and surveillance measures. These include measuring the body temperature of hotel staff members with handheld devices on a daily basis with records, reminding staff members to observe good personal hygiene all the time, and keeping them abreast of the latest situation of virus infection through regular briefings.

A letter on health information on the avian influenza A(H7N9) virus is being issued to guests upon their checking in, while the CHP's pamphlet "Avian flu fact sheet" on prevention, the mode of transmission and clinical features of avian flu is also being made available to them. Cleaning staff members have strengthened their work in common areas of the hotel. Surgical masks will be provided to guests upon request while disinfectant handrub is also available in common areas.

Mr So also asked about the housekeeping work of the hotel, such as the frequency of cleaning as well as the tools and detergent used.

"We understand the hotel industry has preventive measures in place. Should there be any special case, the industry will implement contingency measures," Mr So said after the inspection.

As the Labour Day holidays in the Mainland are less than two weeks away, Mr So

said he expected a busier-than-normal traveller flow and noted that all parties could not slacken off during this crucial period.

Apart from the guidelines issued by the CHP to the hotel industry, the travel trade has also provided guidelines to local tour leaders and tour guides on paying close attention to the health condition of travellers. As far as their Mainland counterparts are concerned, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong is working with the Mainland travel agents to provide guidelines on strengthening risk management before departing for Hong Kong. The guidelines include reminding travellers to avoid going to markets or having contact with poultry.

Mr So said he was glad to see the support by the hotel industry to guard against avian influenza. He appealed to the travel trade, including the hotel industry and practitioners at tourist spots, to continue to take preventive measures to ensure good hygiene conditions, so that Hong Kong could provide a hygienic environment to ensure a pleasant experience for travellers.

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