



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部衛生福利及食物局  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
Government Secretariat, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
The People's Republic of China

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**By Fax: 2890 7726**

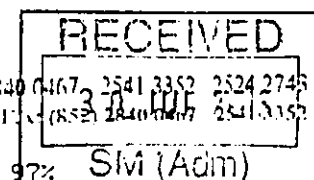
Mrs Judith Siu  
Secretary  
HA Review Panel on SARS Outbreak  
4/F, Hospital Authority Building  
147B Argyle Street  
Kowloon

Dear Mrs Siu,

**HA Review Panel on SARS Outbreak**

Thank you for your letters dated 24 June 2003 and 21 July 2003 on the captioned subject requesting for an account of the roles of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) and the position of the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (SHWF) in the events leading up to and during the SARS outbreak.

As explained in Mr Thomas Yiu's letter dated 2 July 2003, the Hospital Authority (HA) is a statutory body established under the HA Ordinance to manage and control public hospitals for the provision of hospital services, and is accountable to the Government for the effective and efficient delivery of public hospital services. In the context of the SARS outbreak, we expect HA to mobilize its resources effectively and efficiently in the fight of SARS. HWFB is responsible for the overall policy on the provision of public hospital services and the setting of




health policies in the total context of the political, economic and social environment. As the Bureau responsible for health matters, we map out strategy in the management and control of SARS, coordinate efforts in the health sector in combating SARS, and oversee HA's ability to cope with SARS. As requested, a few of the initiatives undertaken by this Bureau are provided hereto for your reference if that can help your internal review.

- On 14 March 2003, SHWF set up and personally chaired the Task Force on SARS to oversee and coordinate preventive efforts and enhance information exchange of the outbreak. Membership of the Task Force comprises representatives from HA, Department of Health (DH), and experts from the University of Hong Kong and Chinese University of Hong Kong. SHWF chaired six meetings in March and one meeting in May to map out the strategy on the management and control of the SARS outbreak, including the transmission mode of SARS, case definition, infection control measures, diagnostic guidelines, treatment protocol, sector-specific disease prevention guidelines, review of public health measures, and communication strategy with the public on SARS.
- The Interdepartmental Action Coordinating Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food was set up on 22 March 2003 to coordinate implementation efforts to control SARS among 20 government departments and four bureaux.
- SHWF initiated in March the development of an electronic database (e-SARS) to capture on-line and real time patient information for use by DH and HA for the management and control of SARS, including case investigation and contact tracing.
- SHWF initiated a review in April to enhance measures to prevent the spread of SARS in residential care homes for the elderly.
- On exchange of information and cross-border co-operation with the Mainland China, SHWF sent a delegation to Guangdong province on 10-11 April 2003 to discuss exchange of information on SARS, medical cooperation, notification mechanism and border quarantine arrangement. A Guangdong-Hong Kong Expert Group was subsequently established and met twice in April and May respectively to take matters forward.

HWFB also provided additional resources to HA for the fight against SARS. We obtained the approval of the Legislative Council Finance Committee (FC) on 31 March 2003 to create a new commitment at \$200 million for the fight against SARS, and to further increase the commitment to \$700m on 18 July. On 27 June, we obtained FC's approval to set up a Training and Welfare Fund for HA at \$200m to strengthen training for health care staff of HA to enhance their expertise in infectious disease control in the hospital setting and to provide assistance to those health care staff who contracted SARS while on duty. On 18 July, we obtained FC's agreement to allocate \$409.6 million to enhance the infection control facilities in nine major acute hospitals.

We understand that the HA Review Panel on SARS Outbreak is tasked to conduct a review on the internal operations of HA in response to the SARS outbreak. If there are any specific questions regarding the role of this Bureau in the SARS outbreak which are relevant to your internal review, we shall be happy to assist.

Yours sincerely,

  
(Miss Joanna Choi)  
for Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food