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Cheoc Van cholera incident not caused by untreated sewage discharge – Environment dept

By Nelson Moura



The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) denied to MNA that the recent case of Cholera bacteria found in the waters of Cheoc Van was caused by a discharge of untreated sewage

On July 22 the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) warned that the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) lab found signs of the Cholera bacteria in water samples collected from Cheoc Van Beach in Coloane.

Cholera is an infectious disease that can be caught by drinking water or eating food contaminated with the cholera bacterium and cause severe diarrhea, dehydration, and even death if left untreated.

The positive samples led municipal authorities to close the beach to swimmers for almost a week until no traces of the bacteria were found again.

The CEO of local energy and environment firm CESL Asia, António Trindade, raised concerns that the presence of the bacteria found at Cheoc Van could be connected to sewage discharges from local treatment plants, adding that the majority of local sewage is discharged to local waters.

When contacted by MNA about the issue the DSPA stated that according to the data collected the operation of the local sewage treatment plant has not been 'abnormal' and that there had been no direct discharge of untreated sewage.

At the same time, the department said it will continue to optimise the software and hardware facilities of each sewage treatment plants to enhance to overall water quality.

'Moreover, DSPA has established a liaison mechanism with relevant departments. When garbage accumulation or other environmental anomalies along the coast of Macau are recorded, they are notified and coordinated through the relevant mechanisms,' the environmental protection department told MNA.

DSPA also said to have stepped-up inspections of the relevant drainage outlets in recent days with no illegal sewage 'found yet'.

'If abnormal conditions are found, the relevant departments will be notified for a coordinated follow-up,' the department added.

Water samples are regularly taken from the monitoring points at the two beaches. After on-site tests of pH, dissolved oxygen, salinity, etc., the samples are then delivered to the IAM Laboratory for bacteriological, chemical and biological analysis

According to IAM data, of the eight times water samples were collected from Cheoc Van Beach and examined in July, only once did the quality of the water was not considered unsatisfactory.

Red flag is also currently raised in Hac Sa Beach and Cheoc Van Beach due to the recent passage of Typhoon Wipha, with large amounts of garbage thrown into the shore.