

Government steps up enforcement against breaches of quarantine orders and appeals to public to report breaches

A Government spokesman today (March 24) said that since the compulsory quarantine requirement for persons arriving at Hong Kong from foreign places was implemented from March 19, a total of 24 persons have been sent to the quarantine centres due to breaches of quarantine orders.

The Police, following reports from members of the public and detection via the Government electronic monitoring system, carried out immediate on-site investigations today. Ten persons were found to have left their dwelling places without permission and were subsequently sent to the quarantine centres. The Department of Health and the Police will continue to follow up investigations to collect more evidence for the Department of Justice to consider prosecution.

The Government appeals to the public to make use of the "e-Report Room" (www.erc.police.gov.hk/cmisercc/CCC/PolicePublicPage?language=en) online platform to report suspected cases of breaching quarantine orders. The Government would like to express its gratitude to benevolent members of the public who provided information through Internet platform which in turn facilitated the seizure of seven persons who were suspected to have breached quarantine orders yesterday (March 23) alone. Members of the public may also report suspected breaches of quarantine orders through report rooms of police stations (www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/contact_us.html#rr) or call 1823.

Regarding Internet rumours that members of the public should call the Department of Health's hotline 2125 1122 to report breaching of quarantine order cases, the Government clarifies that the hotline is set up to facilitate symptomatic persons to contact the Department of Health for help and should not be used for reporting breaches.

The Government once again strongly appeals to the public to follow the quarantine requirement strictly in order to protect the health of their own selves and others. The measure is of utmost importance to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 in the community. Leaving dwelling places without permission is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum imprisonment of six months and a fine of \$25,000.

CHP investigates 30 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (March 24), the CHP is investigating 30 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 387 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 386 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve 18 males and 12 females aged between 15 and 66. Among them, 19 had travel history during the incubation period. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex.

For information on flights that patients of the confirmed cases have taken, please refer to the following webpage: (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/flights_trains_en.pdf). Passengers who travelled on the same flights and sat within two seats surrounding those patients are urged to call the CHP hotlines 2125 1111 and 2125 1122.

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons, who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of proliferation of the disease and continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong."

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes."

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps); cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use; after using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health

authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up the hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 50 462 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on the COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a liter of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

HAD's statement on complaints against Islands District Council member Mr

Wong Chun-yeung

The Home Affairs Department (HAD) recently received a large number of emails and letters complaining against the Islands District Council (DC) member Mr Wong Chun-yeung for publicly declaring his refusal to offer assistance to members of the public who "support the legislation for Article 23".

A spokesman for the HAD said today (March 24), "The DC member's discriminative treatment to members of the public due to their stance on a particular issue will only divide our society, and is contradictory to the spirit of community building and public engagement in community affairs. There is a possible breach of the Code of Conduct for Members of a District Council or Its Committees (Code of Conduct) in this incident. The HAD issued a letter to the DC member concerned, reminding him, as a DC member, to comply with the Code of Conduct and be aware of his words and deeds in order to avoid social conflict and disputes, and damage to community harmony."

The HAD also reminded Mr Wong of the guiding principles in the Guidelines on the Remuneration Package for Members of the District Councils of the HKSAR (Remuneration Guidelines), i.e. a DC member should use public funds in an open, fair and accountable manner. Mr Wong's words and deeds may not be consistent with the guiding principles of the Remuneration Guidelines.

Furthermore, the HAD referred the complaints to the Chairman of Islands DC so that he can follow-up, and hoped that the Islands DC would handle the case impartially, as well as ensuring that DC member would refrain from acts that may compromise or impair his/her integrity, impartiality, objectivity or ability to perform duties and thereby bring the DC into disrepute.

Hong Kong Customs' "Operation Guardian" combats illegal sale of surgical masks on Internet

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (March 23) conducted a special operation to combat the illegal sale of surgical masks on the Internet. A woman was arrested for being suspected of having applied false trade descriptions or a forged trademark in the sale of surgical masks on a social network platform, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information from an authorised representative of a registered trademark, alleging that their trademark and photos were being used on a bogus page of a social network platform for selling suspected

infringing surgical masks.

After an initial investigation, Customs found that the design, photos, colour and wordings of the bogus page highly resembled that of the official page of the trademark representative. The bogus page claimed that surgical masks could be offered for sale in its posts, which intended to mislead customers that the masks were that of the trademark's products. The bogus page also canvassed customers with the statement "surgical masks speedpost", claiming that priority would be given to particular groups. Customers were requested to make a deposit into their designated bank accounts before they would be notified them about the product's delivery.

Upon further investigation, Customs yesterday arrested a 25-year-old woman in Kwai Chung in suspected connection with the case. An investigation is ongoing. The likelihood of further arrests has not been excluded.

This action was part of the "Guardian" operation, which is a large-scale territory-wide special operation launched by Customs on January 27 this year to combat the supply and sale of common protective items that violated the TD0 and the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance. Apart from conducting inspections at retail spots selling protective items in various districts, Customs also deployed Internet investigation teams to detect and analyse online activities for combating suspicious sellers on the Internet.

The "Guardian" operation will continue and Customs will take enforcement action if any irregularities are detected.

Under the TD0, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description or a forged trademark in the course of trade or business commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected infringement activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182, or its dedicated crime reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (March 24), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 248 patients (112 male and 136 female, aged 18 months to 87 years) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 448 patients under isolation currently. So far, 102 patients who had COVID-19 confirmed or probable infections have been discharged upon recovery.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.