

Government approves first two production lines under Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau announced today (March 20) that it has approved the first two production lines under the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme.

The applicant of the first approved production line is Topwill Passion Limited. The production line is expected to supply an average of 2 million masks to the Government every month starting from April 20, and produce a further 250 000 masks for the local market on average every month.

The applicant of the second approved production line is Shang Manufactory Limited. The production line is expected to supply an average of 800 000 masks to the Government every month starting from May 5.

Based on their committed production output, the above-mentioned production lines may receive subsidies of up to \$2.5 million and \$2 million respectively. The actual amount of each subsidy is contingent upon the actual expenditure for production equipment and setting up the venue and clean room facilities, as well as testing and standards compliance, and will be finalised when the expenditure is confirmed.

The Scheme will provide subsidies to a maximum of 20 local production lines. Taking into account the two approved applications, there remains a subsidy quota of 18 production lines.

As of yesterday (March 19), the Scheme had attracted a total of 82 applications. Apart from the two approved applications above, five other applications, after verification, have been confirmed to have met all the five eligibility criteria of the Scheme and the Government will process them as soon as possible. 70 applications have yet to meet the eligibility criteria, while the eligibility of five applications is being verified.

The Government launched the Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund to facilitate local production of masks as soon as possible to help address the imminent shortage as well as to build up stock. An applicant must be a company holding a valid Business Registration Certificate and a valid Certificate of Incorporation in Hong Kong and demonstrate that the following five eligibility criteria have been met:

- having the production equipment in Hong Kong;
- having the raw materials in Hong Kong;
- having already in place or rented the production venue in Hong Kong;
- having already in place, rented or hired a contractor to set up clean

- room facilities in Hong Kong; and
- each production line being able to produce at least 500 000 masks per month.

The Government has engaged the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) to administer the Scheme. Details of the Scheme can be found at the HKPC's website: u.hkpc.org/mask. Companies interested in applying can contact the HKPC's hotline at 2788 6035 or email mask@hkpc.org.

Temporary test centres speed up tests for people upon arrival

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Based on the experience of the past few days, the Hospital Authority (HA) expects the referral to public hospitals by the Port Health Division of the Department of Health of a large number of people suspected to be infected with COVID-19 to arrive at Hong Kong via the Hong Kong International Airport every day. The HA is working on the establishment of test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and the North Lantau Hospital under the instruction of the Government's Steering Committee in relation to the COVID-19 virus.

Starting tomorrow (March 20), people arriving Hong Kong with upper respiratory symptoms will be sent to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo or the North Lantau Hospital for the viral test and to wait for the laboratory results.

The HA spokesperson said, "HA will deploy healthcare staff to the temporary test centres to collect and arrange the specimens to the hospital laboratories for testing in batches."

"People awaiting the test results will need to stay at the temporary test centre. It is estimated that it will take about half a day to a day to arrange the delivery and tests of specimens in batches."

Both test centres have designated waiting areas and individual waiting places, and will provide Internet access and charging facilities. The waiting area facilities and arrangements are in compliance with infection control standards.

Healthcare staff will arrange the transfer of patients with positive test results to public hospitals for isolation and treatment. As for those who have negative test results, they can return to their residence and continue their home quarantine for 14 days.

The spokesman added, "generally speaking, older people or those who may have other medical needs will be sent to the test centre at North Lantau Hospital. People arriving Hong Kong may also be sent directly to other public hospitals for their clinical condition."

CE inspects compulsory quarantine measures at Hong Kong International Airport (with photos/video)

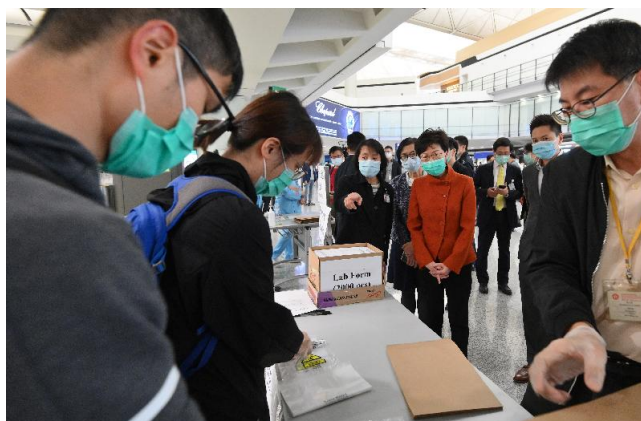
The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, visited Hong Kong International Airport this afternoon (March 19) to inspect the implementation of compulsory quarantine measures for all persons arriving from overseas countries and territories starting from 0.00am today. She also encouraged personnel of the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AA) and various departments including the Department of Health's Port Health Division and the Immigration Department, thanking them for sparing no effort in enforcing relevant quarantine measures to protect Hong Kong and people's health.

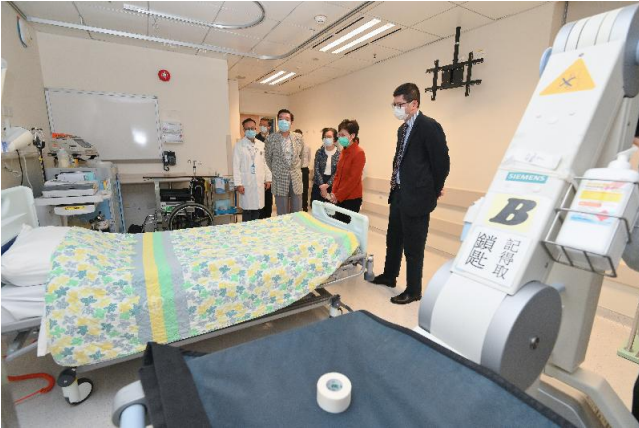
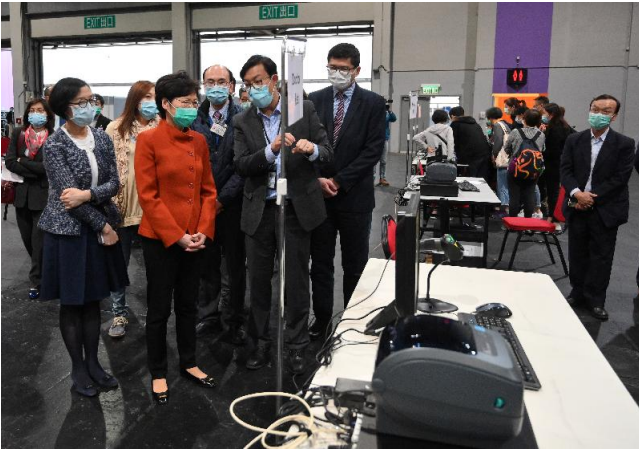
Accompanied by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, and the Chief Executive Officer of the AA, Mr Fred Lam, Mrs Lam learned about the workflow of implementing mandatory quarantine for people arriving in Hong Kong at the airport, including body temperature checks and collection of health declaration forms, issuing quarantine orders and helping arriving passengers put on electronic wristbands to ensure they stay at their dwelling places while under quarantine, and distributing information packs to introduce to them the procedures of a quarantine order and other points to note. Some people arriving in Hong Kong were also given a specimen container for participation in the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme.

Given the proliferation of the disease around the world, the number of imported cases has increased significantly and there have been a number of cases involving reports of symptoms in travellers on arrival in recent days. To minimise the risk of the spread of the virus in the local community and alleviate the pressure on the hospitals of the Hospital Authority (HA), the HA, on the instruction of the Steering Committee in relation to the COVID-19 virus, is preparing for the establishment of test centres at AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital, to which some of the travellers will be diverted for collection of specimens for viral tests. After leaving the airport, Mrs Lam also visited AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital to find out more on the preparation work by the HA for the establishment of the test centres, which she noted will be in operation shortly. The Chairman of the HA, Mr Henry Fan, and the Chief Executive Officer of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, also joined the visit.

Noting that the overall operation of the expansion of the coverage of compulsory quarantine at the airport on its first day had been generally smooth, Mrs Lam expressed gratitude to the Department of Health, the Immigration Department, the AA and relevant personnel for their hard work. She also thanked the affected travellers for their co-operation and understanding. While pointing out that although the overall number of arrivals today has dropped, she said that many people including overseas students are expected to return to Hong Kong in the coming one or two weeks and that the Government will do its utmost in making arrangements for compulsory quarantine to prevent the disease from spreading in the community. She added that the Steering Committee has requested the Department of Health to enhance the capacity of virus tests and consider setting up a test centre at the AsiaWorld-Expo as well.

"In light of the number of confirmed cases in recent days, the threat of transmission of the virus into Hong Kong from overseas is huge. I appeal to all the people under quarantine to abide strictly with the requirements of the quarantine order by not going out for 14 days. Otherwise, there will be legal responsibility. They should also pay attention to personal hygiene during home quarantine and remain vigilant to minimise contacts with family members in order to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. As long as we stay united, Hong Kong will definitely win the battle against the epidemic," Mrs Lam said.





[Princess Margaret Hospital made an announcement on hospital canteen disinfection incident](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) made the following announcement today (March 19):

A 57-year-old male patient, who presented with cough and fever, went to

the Accident and Emergency Department (AED) of PMH yesterday (March 18) afternoon. Before he registered at the AED, he had meals at the hospital canteen for 20 minutes. The patient then went to the AED for consultation. As he presented with fever and had travel history, he was immediately transferred to the Infectious Disease Centre for monitoring. He was later tested preliminary positive to COVID-19 and has been treated under isolation. His confirmatory test towards COVID-19 is pending.

The hospital canteen was immediately cleansed and disinfected after discussion with the Infection Control Team once the hospital learnt that the patient had visited there.

The hospital will contact closely with the canteen vendor and monitor the health condition of canteen staff.

The hospital appealed to members of the public to avoid dining out if they have travel history, fever and upper respiratory symptoms.

CHP investigates 16 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (March 19), the CHP is investigating 16 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 209 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 208 confirmed cases and one probable case).

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.

Today's cases involve 11 males and five females aged between 19 and 51. Among them, 14 had travel history during the incubation period / are classified as imported cases. For case details, please see Annex I. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For the progress on the contact tracing of the cases, please see Annex II.

For information on flights that patients of the confirmed cases have taken, please refer to the following website: (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 hotline.

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 spokesman said, "The CHP 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 yesterday, a total of 39 506 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.