

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cocaine \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 600 grams of suspected cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$700,000 from a female passenger arriving at Hong Kong International Airport yesterday (March 18).

A 52-year-old female passenger arrived in Hong Kong from Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Manila, Philippines yesterday. She was found to be suspicious upon customs clearance and was suspected to have dangerous drugs concealed inside her body cavities. She was then escorted to hospital for examination and later discharged the batch of suspected cocaine. She was arrested.

The arrested woman has been charged with one count of trafficking in a dangerous drug. The case will be brought up at Fanling Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (March 20).

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

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



[Pet dog tests positive for COVID-19](#)

[virus](#)

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (March 19) that a pet dog sent to the AFCD has repeatedly tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. This is another infected case following an earlier case in which a 17-year-old Pomeranian dog tested weak positive during repeated tests for the virus.

The current case involves a German Shepherd dog that lived in a residence at Pok Fu Lam. When the owner was confirmed with COVID-19, the dog was sent for quarantine with another mixed breed dog from the same residence to the animal keeping facility at the Hong Kong Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge yesterday (March 18). No positive results were obtained from the mixed breed dog and neither dog has shown any signs of disease.

The Department will continue to closely monitor both dogs and conduct repeated tests on the animals.

The AFCD will continue to work together with the Department of Health in handling relevant cases. To ensure public and animal health, the Department strongly advises that mammalian pet animals including dogs and cats from households with persons confirmed as infected with COVID-19, or close contacts of COVID-19 infected persons, should be put under quarantine in AFCD facilities.

The spokesman reminded pet owners to adopt good hygiene practices (including hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing them) and to maintain a clean and hygienic household environment. People who are sick should restrict contact with animals. If there are any changes in the health condition of the pets, advice from a veterinarian should be sought as soon as possible.

The spokesman emphasised that there is currently no evidence that pet animals can be a source of COVID-19 for humans or that this virus can cause the disease in dogs. Pet owners should always maintain good hygiene practices and under no circumstances should they abandon their pets.

[USFH's opening remarks at press briefing on updates of COVID-19 cases \(with video\)](#)

The Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi; the Head of the

Communicable Disease Branch of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, Dr Chuang Shuk-kwan; and the Hospital Authority Chief Manager (Clinical Effectiveness and Technology Management), Dr Linda Yu, held a press briefing on the latest situation of COVID-19 this afternoon (March 19). Following are the opening remarks by Dr Chui:

Hong Kong is facing a new wave of public health risks from import-related COVID-19 infections. In the past two weeks, from March 5 to March 18, around 92 per cent are imported cases and cases related to their close contacts and those with travel history during the incubation period. Of these cases, only two involve non-Hong Kong residents, and the rest are Hong Kong residents.

The World Health Organization had declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic on March 11. Globally, the number of recorded cases has continued to surge to more than 200,000, with over 80,000 cases in the Mainland and more than 120,000 cases overseas. The HKSAR Government has issued the Red Outbound Travel Alert on all overseas countries and territories on March 17, and we advise against non-essential travel abroad.

From early this morning (March 19), all people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to any overseas countries/territories in the past 14 days are subject to compulsory quarantine. Meanwhile, the quarantine measures announced earlier for people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to two areas in Korea, Iran and also three regions in Italy, as well as Hong Kong residents returning from Hubei Province, in the past 14 days to stay in a quarantine centre for quarantine remain unchanged. The measure that all people entering Hong Kong from other parts of the Mainland apart from Hubei will be required to undergo compulsory quarantine upon their arrival also remains unchanged.

For those who have travelled or returned to Hong Kong earlier before these measures take place, please be mindful of personal hygiene and pay attention to social distance. Please continue to wear a mask for 14 days. Do avoid gatherings.

If one of your household members is under home quarantine, please pay attention to the health advice of the Department of Health.

For those who must leave Hong Kong, please be mindful of the potential health risks and the quarantine arrangements upon return to Hong Kong. Please put on a surgical mask all the time, avoid close contact with persons with a fever or respiratory symptoms, avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities and crowded places, and seek medical advice at once if experiencing a fever or respiratory symptoms.

For those who have plans to come back to Hong Kong, please pay attention to the points to note on the plane to avoid the chance of infection.

For those who are overseas and have already developed symptoms, please consult a doctor and do not come back for your own good and for the health of

other people.

For the friends of different ethnicities in Hong Kong, we have health tips for you at the Government's thematic website, www.cornavirus.gov.hk

The pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 has brought tremendous challenges to Hong Kong. To reduce the risk of importation of COVID-19 to Hong Kong, and to alleviate the pressure on our healthcare system, we need the co-operation and support of every one of you in Hong Kong in fighting against the virus. Thank you.

Disbursement of subsidies to construction industry under Anti-epidemic Fund in progress

The Government has set aside \$710 million under the Anti-epidemic Fund to implement targeted measures to support the construction industry in combating the effects of COVID-19, reducing the risk of viral infection and spread among site workers, and preventing outbreaks of the disease on construction sites that would lead to mass suspension of work among construction workers.

These measures include a subsidy of \$50,000 each to about 7 000 eligible contractors, subcontractors and consultants, as well as a subsidy of \$1,500 each to about 240 000 in-service construction workers, who need to work in a labour-intensive environment on construction sites, to help cover the extra expenses for procuring anti-epidemic equipment.

A spokesman for the Development Bureau said today (March 19) that as of yesterday (March 18), about 4 000 companies and 200 000 construction workers had applied for the subsidies, of which over 2 200 companies and about 156 000 construction workers received the subsidies. The total amount disbursed exceeded \$340 million.

"Shortly after the approval of the Anti-epidemic Fund by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on February 21, application for the subsidy by the industry through the Construction Industry Council (CIC) commenced on February 24. We would like to thank the CIC for its assistance in launching the dedicated website and mobile app within a short time to facilitate easy application," the spokesman said.

Eligible companies or workers who have not yet submitted their applications may visit the CIC's dedicated website for details (www.cic.hk/eng/main/anti_epidemic_fund/). The deadline for application is

August 31.

For more details, please call the CIC hotline at 3199 7377 or email PPEFund@cic.hk.

Suspected MERS cases reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (March 19) reported three suspected cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit. The cases are detailed below:

Sex	Female	Female	Female
Age	60	19	48
Affected area involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Nil	Camel ride	Camel ride
Hospital	North District Hospital	Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital	Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital
Condition	Stable	Stable	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Negative	Negative	Negative

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed relevant symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt

appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).