

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session (with video)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, and the Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Health), Mr Howard Chan, met the media today (April 1). Following is the transcript of remarks made by Professor Chan:

Reporter: Why are the three premises including beauty salons and message houses are allowed to remain open, especially when there is beauty salon staff has come down with the virus today? The second question, is it a bit rush because the announcement did not come until 17:56 and the premises only has four minutes to close. Why did the arrangement not announce before gazetted? Thirdly, at 3pm we knew that the Gazette said the arrangement would take effect from 3pm. The Government clarified that the arrangement would not come effective until 6pm. That's a bit confusing to the public especially the practitioners. Could you explain why would that be the case?

Secretary for Food and Health: Thank you for your question. First of all, I think this is an emergency regulation. This morning, the regulation was discussed at the Executive Council meeting with the Chief Executive and decided that we are going along with this direction. Why it is 3pm and also 6pm, it is in fact something technical. Probably my colleague, Deputy Secretary Howard, can explain a little bit more. At 3pm, we have to publish the Gazette so as to provide the Secretary for Food and Health with the authority to do it. This is step one. Step two, then we decided the time to have this regulation and also directions to become effective. That is 6pm. As I have said, it is of course time critical given this is an emergency regulation and we are in a public health emergency. Therefore, on one hand we want to start as soon as possible. On the other hand, we also understand that, practicably given such short time, these premises might have difficulties or very rush in terms of the closure or preparation. So in the beginning, in terms of enforcement, we would provide advice. The enforcement colleagues will obviously take into consideration these factors.

Reporter: Why are beauty salons not required to close?

Secretary for Food and Health: In deciding which are the premises that we are going to close temporarily for 14 days, first of all we look into the risks, so it is risk-based. I mentioned earlier that there are all these premises whereby there are activities involving more gathering opportunities. I think these are high risks. Therefore we choose to have closure of these premises. We would also look into the confirmed cases and also all the clusters. Those are some of the information that we are relying on. This time we have added three types of premises, and beauty parlours are one of them because we think they also have some risks. At this point in time, we give directions in the infection control measures, such as taking temperature before entering the premises, wearing masks all the time wherever possible and also having hand sanitizers so as to maintain hand hygiene. I think these measures are the initial steps. Of course, we will continue to monitor the situation, and

would not rule out the possibility of any further measures such as closure or other measures if the situation changes.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

CHP investigates 51 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (April 1), the CHP is investigating 51 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 766 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 765 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve 28 males and 23 females aged between 1 month old and 65. Among them, 34 had travel history during the incubation period and 15 are overseas students. 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 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 77 193 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.
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Update on COVID-19 test centres

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

From March 20 to 9pm today (April 1), 797 and 179 people have been referred to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital respectively for COVID-19 viral test. So far, 917 people have negative test results for COVID-19 and have returned to their residence to continue the home quarantine.

Preliminary positive test results will be further confirmed by the Department of Health and announced as confirmed cases in due course.

EDB clarification

In view of public enquiries about an online video clip on "retaliation" recently circulated on YouTube, a spokesman for the Education Bureau (EDB) today (April 1) sternly clarified that the video, which was uploaded by an organisation with a similar name of the Educational Television (ETV), is not produced or authorised to produce by the EDB. The video has nothing to do with the EDB.

The spokesman said that as the name of the production organisation is very similar to the ETV and the video has used children and cartoon as entry points, it may mislead people into believing that the video is a teaching material for children. Meanwhile, the content of the video is biased, unfounded and has distorted our value system and spread hatred, which makes people worry that it would cause adverse impact on children.

The EDB has reported to YouTube. Parents are advised to keep a watchful eye on online information available and prevent their children from being contaminated by this kind of immoral audio-visual materials.

Regarding the learning and teaching materials developed by the EDB, teachers, students and parents can view the ETV resources via the EDB's official platforms, including the Hong Kong Education City ETV website (www.hkedcity.net/etv/en/), the ETV mobile application and the edbgovhk YouTube.

Traveller jailed for smuggling and cruelty to tortoises

A traveller who smuggled 57 tortoises and was convicted earlier for violating the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance was sentenced to imprisonment today (April 1).

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that the 47-year-old male passenger arrived in Hong Kong on September 28, 2019, from Moroni, Comoros, via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A total of 57 tortoises wrapped with plastic tape, comprising 55 radiated tortoises and two Madagascar tortoises, were found in his baggage by Customs officers.

After follow-up examination, a veterinarian of the AFCD opined that the 57 tortoises were subjected to unnecessary suffering and their health and welfare had been severely neglected. The AFCD subsequently charged the man. He was convicted at the District Court on March 30 this year. With 36 months' and 12 months' of imprisonment as the starting point for sentencing for the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance respectively and one-third reduction as he pleaded guilty, the defendant was sentenced to 24 months and eight months behind bars today under the respective ordinances. The sentences are to run concurrently. It is the highest penalty handed out under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance for illegal import of live endangered species so far.

The radiated tortoise and the Madagascar tortoise are listed in Appendix I to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and regulated under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance in Hong Kong. Any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

Under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance, the maximum penalty for cruelty to animals is a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for three years.

To enquire about the control of endangered species or to report suspected irregularities, the public can call the AFCD on 1823 or visit the website www.cites.hk.