

Latest arrangements on LCSD public services

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced today (March 21) that, in view of the latest situation of COVID-19, the leisure venues and cultural facilities reopened earlier this month will be temporarily closed starting from March 23 (Monday). Other venues and facilities that are not yet reopened will remain closed until further notice.

Outdoor leisure venues / facilities including tennis courts; bowling greens; running tracks in sports grounds; Ngau Chi Wan Park Archery Range; Shek O Obstacle Golf Course; the archery range, golf driving range and practice greens at Tuen Mun Recreation and Sports Centre; grass pitches; artificial turf soccer pitches; public swimming pools; beaches; water sports centres; holiday camps and camp site, etc, will keep closed.

All indoor sports facilities will also be closed.

Non-fee charging land-based leisure facilities, including parks, playgrounds, outdoor hard-surface pitches, skateboard grounds, skateparks, roller skating rinks and cycling grounds, will maintain services.

Meanwhile, all booking applications for the department's land-based recreation and sports facilities, both fee-charging and non-fee-charging, are suspended until further notice.

Application for use of wedding venues, amphitheatres and non-fee charging leisure venues for non-designated use/sales activities is suspended until further notice.

All libraries will be temporarily closed.

All book drop services of the Hong Kong Public Libraries and those located at three MTR stations as well as the self-service library stations at Island East Sports Centre Sitting-out Area, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and Tsuen Nam Road, Tai Wai will also suspend services. Public libraries will continue to provide online services such as e-Books and e-Databases.

All museums, performance venues and music centres of the Music Office will be closed. All major facilities of performance venues will not be opened before the end of April.

The URBTIX outlets and ticket dispensing machines at LCSD performance venues will also be closed. URBTIX will maintain Internet and mobile app ticketing and hotline services.

Refund arrangements in relation to closure of leisure venues and cultural facilities will be announced in due course.

The LCSD will continue to monitor the situation closely and review the arrangements in a timely manner.

CHP investigates 17 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (March 21), the CHP is investigating 17 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 274 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 273 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve five males and 12 females aged between 11 and 70. Among them, 13 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 yesterday, a total of 41 857 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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HKSAR Government adjusts operation plan on second batch of chartered flights to bring back Hong Kong people stranded in Hubei

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (March 21) announced that it would commission a total of four chartered flights on March 25 and 26 to bring back Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei. There will also be adjustments to the operational plan, including requiring Hong Kong residents who return from other areas in Hubei Province except Wuhan be put under home quarantine for 14 days, and excluding the new assistance cases of Wuhan in the operation.

The adjustments to this second batch operation are made after careful scrutiny of the COVID-19 situation in the Mainland and the latest situation in Hong Kong, as well as weighing the local public health risks. The aim is to ensure that, while the HKSAR Government is making the utmost effort in bringing back Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei, the preventive and medical systems in Hong Kong would have adequate capacity to deal with the epidemic situation.

The relevant adjustments have two aspects. First, as the epidemic situation in Hubei Province has eased recently, after consulting the views of public health experts, Hong Kong people who return from other areas in Hubei Province except Wuhan will be put under 14 days of home quarantine.

Meanwhile, all preventive measures implemented for the first batch of operation, including health assessments, verification of confirmed cases by the Hubei Provincial Government for Hong Kong people taking the chartered flights, and multiple temperature checks before boarding, shall continue. Those who have fever, or develop abnormal vital signs or symptoms of respiratory diseases or other infectious diseases will not be allowed to board the flights.

Second, as Wuhan is still classified by the local authorities as a high-risk area, on expert advice, those returning from Wuhan will be required to undergo 14 days of quarantine at the quarantine centres. In view of the surge of imported cases in Hong Kong, sufficient units have to be reserved in the quarantine centres to cater for the expected rapid increase of close contacts of confirmed cases, and also for possible contingencies. Therefore, the operation this time will not cater for new assistance cases in Wuhan.

The Economic and Trade Office of the HKSAR Government in Wuhan will continue to maintain close contact with Hong Kong residents requesting for assistance in Wuhan, and will strive to provide assistance to them as far as practicable.

Update on COVID-19 test centres

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

From March 20 to 9pm today (March 21), 108 and 14 travellers have been referred to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital respectively for COVID-19 viral test. So far, 80 travellers have negative test results for COVID-19 and have returned to their residence to continue the 14-day home quarantine.

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

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (March 21), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 243 patients (125 male and 118 female, aged six months to 89 years) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 362 patients under isolation currently. So far, 101 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.