

## MD announcement

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

The Marine Department today (March 12) reminded masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters to proceed at a safe speed and exercise extreme caution because restricted visibility of less than 2 nautical miles has been reported.

Appropriate sound signals shall be made when underway or at anchor. All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

Also, when radar is used without the benefit of adequate plotting facilities, the information obtained from the equipment is rather limited and should be construed accordingly.

Visibility reports are broadcast by the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) on VHF channels 02, 12, 14, 63 and 67.

In the event of an accident, a report shall be made immediately to the VTC at Tel: 2233 7801.

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## Illegal worker jailed

A Vietnamese illegal worker was jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday (March 11).

During an anti-illegal worker operation conducted on March 9, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators arrested a female Vietnamese, aged 29, outside a fruit store in Yuen Long while she was working as a garbage cleaning worker. An employer suspected of employing the illegal worker was also arrested and an investigation is ongoing.

The illegal worker was charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. She pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment.

An ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a

removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

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## **Response to US report on human rights**

In response to media enquiries, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (March 12) made the following response to the comments contained in the United States Department of State's 2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices relating to the HKSAR:

"Since the return to the Motherland, the HKSAR has been exercising 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' and a high degree of autonomy in strict

accordance with the Basic Law of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China. The 'one country, two systems' principle has been fully and successfully implemented."

"Safeguarding human rights and freedoms is a constitutional duty of the HKSAR Government. The government attaches the utmost importance to and is firmly committed to upholding human rights and various freedoms in Hong Kong."

"Article 4 of the Basic Law states that the HKSAR shall safeguard the rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and of other persons in the Region in accordance with law. In addition to the Basic Law, human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong are fully protected by the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other legislation."

"Rights and freedoms in Hong Kong are underpinned by the rule of law and judicial independence, which are the cornerstones of HKSAR's common law system and are well-recognised internationally. The over 54 000 peaceful public assemblies and processions held between 2014 and May 2019 most strongly testify to this commitment."

"Since June 2019, over 1 400 public demonstrations, processions and public meetings were held, but many ended in serious violence such as hurling of petrol bombs, burning or vandalising of shops and so on.

The degree and extent of violence committed by radical protesters was unprecedented in Hong Kong, and it has seriously endangered people's personal safety, public order and security. Faced with this situation, the Hong Kong Police is duty-bound to take appropriate actions, including the use of necessary force, to restore law and order. In the process, police officers also faced threats of serious injuries or even death. For complaints against the Police, they will be handled professionally and impartially under a well-established mechanism. In addition, the Independent Police Complaints Council is conducting a fact-finding study on the handling of large-scale public order events since June last year, including corresponding actions by the Police, to ascertain the facts and will prepare a report. The content of the report will be made public."

"It is important to point out that, whilst the HKSAR Government has steadfastly safeguarded the freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly, but as in other jurisdictions, such freedoms are not absolute. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that restrictions might be imposed by law if this is necessary to protect, amongst others, national security, public safety, public order or the rights and freedoms of others."

"The Basic Law clearly stipulates that the HKSAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Any suggestion for 'Hong Kong's independence' is a blatant violation of the Basic Law and a direct affront to the national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the PRC. 'Hong Kong's independence' runs counter to the successful implementation of

'one country, two systems' and undermines the HKSAR's constitutional and legal foundations as enshrined in the Basic Law. Relevant international human rights conventions and court cases have clearly pointed out that freedom of speech is not absolute."

"On elections, the Basic Law stipulates that permanent residents of the HKSAR shall have the right to vote and the right to stand for elections in accordance with law. At the same time, the HKSAR Government has a duty to implement and uphold the Basic Law and to ensure that all elections will be conducted in accordance with the Basic Law and relevant electoral laws. Any allegations of political censorship, restriction of the freedom of speech or deprivation of the right to stand for elections are totally unfounded."

"As for constitutional development, universal suffrage of 'one person, one vote' for selecting the Chief Executive and electing all members of the Legislative Council is enshrined as an ultimate aim in the Basic Law. To achieve this aim, the community needs to engage in dialogues, premised on the legal basis and under a peaceful atmosphere with mutual trust, with a view to narrowing differences and attaining a consensus agreeable to all sides. The HKSAR Government will assess the situation carefully and take forward constitutional development in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant Interpretation and Decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. As a matter of fact, the HKSAR Government took forward constitutional development in accordance with law between 2013 and 2015, and put forward a practicable proposal for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage. However, the proposal was vetoed by members of the Legislative Council who claimed to strive for democracy."

"Regarding prosecutions, the HKSAR Government is committed to safeguarding the rule of law and judicial independence in Hong Kong. Article 63 of the Basic Law entrenches the constitutional principle of prosecutorial independence. The conduct of all criminal prosecutions of the Department of Justice is free from any interference. Decisions to prosecute or not, as the case may be, must be based on an objective and professional assessment of the available evidence and the law, and be in accordance with the published Prosecution Code. No political consideration is being taken into account at all. There is no question of 'political prosecutions'."

The spokesman reiterated that foreign governments should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR.

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## **Masks provided for HKDSE candidates**

In response to media reports on online allegations that masks provided for this year's Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) candidates were not up to standard or had expired, a Government

spokesman made the following clarification today (March 11):

The Education Bureau announced earlier that this year's HKDSE candidates would be provided masks distributed through the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). These masks were supplied by the Government Logistics Department (GLD), including one batch from Mainland China with an expiry date of August 2023, and another batch from Russia with an expiry date of December 2024. Upon receipt of these masks, GLD conducted random checks in accordance with the established procedures and found them in order.

Since GLD procures masks from different suppliers and places of origin to meet the huge demand of government departments, the appearance and thickness of these masks may slightly vary. GLD has sought the professional advice of the Department of Health on the standards of masks and placed orders on this basis. It also ensures that the masks have not expired before distributing them to departments.

HKDSE candidates may report to their schools if they find any masks received damaged or unclean. Schools will follow up suitably with the HKEAA.

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## **CHP investigates nine additional cases of COVID-19**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 8pm today (March 11), the CHP is investigating nine additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 130 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 129 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Six of today's confirmed cases (the 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th and 129th cases) are related to the cluster involving a group tour from Hong Kong to Egypt announced yesterday (March 10). The patients are members and the tour guide of the same tour group of the three patients in the 119th, 120th and 121st cases.

Patients of the 123rd and the 129th cases are a couple, who are respectively a 57-year-old man and a 52-year-old woman, living in Tower 7, Bellagio in Sham Tseng and joining the same group tour to Egypt. The male patient is a staff member of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. With underlying illnesses, he developed fever and cough since March 8 and sought medical advice at St John Hospital yesterday and was admitted to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for treatment on the same day. The female patient has good past health. She developed throat discomfort and malaise since March 8. She was sent to Yan Chai Hospital during contact tracing by CHP yesterday and was transferred to the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) for treatment today. The patients' respiratory samples were

both tested positive for COVID-19 virus today and they are in a stable condition.

The 124th case involves a 59-year-old woman who is the wife of the patient of the 119th case confirmed yesterday and a member of the same group tour. The patient has good past health and lives in Heng Tai House, Fu Heng Estate in Tai Po. She developed cough and runny nose since March 6, and was admitted to Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital for treatment during contact tracing by CHP yesterday. Her respiratory specimen was tested positive for COVID-19 virus today and she is in stable condition. Her son who lives with her is asymptomatic and under quarantine.

The 125th case involves a 23-year-old man who is the Hong Kong tour guide of the Egypt group tour. The patient has good past health and lives in Block T, Telford Gardens in Kowloon Bay. The patient was found to have developed fever before sending to the quarantine centre yesterday and hence sent to the United Christian Hospital for treatment. His respiratory specimen was tested positive for COVID-19 virus and he is in a stable condition. His parents who live with him are asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The patients of the 126th and 127th cases are a couple who are a 63-year-old man and a 63-year-old woman living in Block 26, Laguna City, Kwun Tong and joining the same group tour. Both with good past health, the patients were found to have developed fever before sending to the quarantine centre yesterday and hence sent to the United Christian Hospital for treatment. They are in a stable condition and their respiratory specimen was tested positive for COVID-19 virus today. Their daughter who lives with them is asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The group tour took the flight TK695 (economy class cabin) by Turkish Airlines from Cairo in Egypt to Istanbul in Turkey on March 6 and then departed Istanbul on flight TK70 (economy class cabin) by Turkish Airlines arriving Hong Kong on March 7. Passengers who travelled in the same cabin on board the flights are urged to call the CHP hotline.

The remaining three cases are the 122nd, 128th and 130th cases. The patient of the 122nd case is a 22-year-old female flight attendant who is a close contact of a 19-year-old female patient confirmed in Dongguan, Guangdong. The patient has good past health who lives in Mau Lam House, Kwong Lam Court, Sha Tin. She developed runny nose since March 6 and chills on March 9. When arranging quarantine yesterday, the patient was found to have fever and immediately sent to the Prince of Wales Hospital for treatment. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for COVID-19 virus today and she is now in stable condition. The patient lives with her parents, who are both asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The patient visited Amsterdam in the Netherlands from February 21 to 24. She departed Hong Kong for Madrid, Spain on March 3 and then worked at the flight CX320 (economy class cabin) by Cathay Pacific from Madrid back to Hong Kong arriving on March 8. People who travelled on the same cabin of the

above-mentioned flight are urged to call the CHP hotline.

The 128th case involves a 36-year-old woman who is the daughter of the 69-year-old male patient of the 58th case confirmed on February 17. The patient has good past health and lives in Yee Ching House, Yee Ming Estate, Tseung Kwan O. She had been sent to the quarantine centre as a close contact on February 17 and is under medical surveillance after completing quarantine on March 1. She developed diarrhoea since March 8 and runny nose since March 9. She attended Caritas Medical Centre on March 10 and was admitted for treatment. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for COVID-19 virus today and she is now in stable condition. The patient had no recent travel history.

The 130th case involves a 31-year-old woman with good past health who arrived at Hong Kong from England on February 29. She stayed at her parents' flat at iPlace on Castle Peak Road in Kwai Chung. She developed fever since March 3 and sought treatment at PMH yesterday where she was admitted for treatment. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for COVID-19 virus today and she is now in stable condition. The patient travelled to Hong Kong with her husband and son. Her husband has developed fever and was arranged to be sent to PMH for treatment. Her son and parents are asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. Quarantine will be arranged for close contacts while medical surveillance will be arranged for other contacts. For the progress on the contact tracing of the cases, please see the annex.

Meanwhile, the CHP is following up on the contact tracing of a confirmed case outside Hong Kong. The case involves a 25-year-old male patient in Shenzhen, Guangdong who took the flight CX260 (economy class cabin) by Cathay Pacific from Paris, France to Hong Kong arriving on March 10. People who travelled on the same cabin of the above-mentioned flight are urged to call the CHP hotline.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "The CHP reminded members of the public that as the transmission of the COVID-19 virus has been increasing around the world, they are advised to consider delaying all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong."

"Meanwhile, according to our epidemiological investigations, clusters are observed in the local community involving large meal gatherings and other gatherings. Members of the public are urged to go out less and reduce social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings, and maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible."

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 and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up a hotline (2125 1122) for public enquiries. The hotline operates from 8am to midnight daily. As at 4pm today, a total of 31 706 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://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.

Members of the public are advised to consider delaying all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong. The public should take heed of the health advice below if it is unavoidable to travel outside Hong Kong:

- Do not travel to Hubei Province of the Mainland where there is widespread community transmission of the COVID-19 virus;
- Avoid unnecessary travel to Korea (especially Daegu and Gyeongsangbuk-do where the majority of cases were reported), Iran, Italy, Bourgogne-Franche-Comte and Grand Est regions in France, the North Rhine-Westphalia region in Germany, Hokkaido in Japan as well as the La Rioja, Madrid and Pais Vasco regions in Spain;
- When travelling to countries/areas with active community transmission of COVID-19 virus, the public should avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms. If it is unavoidable to come into contact with them, put on a surgical mask and continue to do so until 14 days after returning to Hong Kong;
- Avoid visiting hospitals. If it is necessary to visit a hospital, put on a surgical mask and observe strict personal and hand hygiene;
- Avoid touching animals (including game), poultry/birds or their droppings;
- Avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms;
- Avoid making close contact with patients, especially those with symptoms of acute respiratory infections;
- Do not consume game meat and do not patronise food premises where game meat is served;
- Adhere to food safety and hygiene rules such as avoiding consuming raw or undercooked animal products, including milk, eggs and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or contaminated products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled;
- If feeling unwell when outside Hong Kong, especially if experiencing a fever or cough, wear a surgical mask, inform the hotel staff or tour escort and seek medical advice at once; and
- After returning to Hong Kong, consult a doctor promptly if experiencing a fever or other symptoms, take the initiative to inform the doctor of any recent travel history and any exposure to animals, and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.