

Scientific committees under CHP review control strategy for novel coronavirus infection

The Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Infection Control under the Department of Health's Centre for Health Protection this afternoon (February 17) convened a joint meeting to review the measures in light of the latest situation of novel coronavirus infection in Hong Kong.

At the meeting today, members of the Scientific Committees were updated of the latest global and local situation of novel coronavirus infection. They also reviewed the current surveillance and control measures in Hong Kong.

Members agreed that there is evidence of community transmission of novel coronavirus in Hong Kong. In order to stop ongoing spread and prevent the disease from taking root locally, Hong Kong should continue to maintain the current strategy of isolating cases, quarantine of close contacts and medical surveillance of other contacts.

The Scientific Committees acknowledged that as the outbreaks in Mainland China continue to propagate, the existing measures to minimise the population movements between Hong Kong and Mainland China should remain in place and be periodically assessed.

Members also reviewed the quarantine period for contacts of confirmed cases. In view of the existing data on the incubation period of novel coronavirus, the quarantine period for close contacts is recommended to be maintained at 14 days. Members advised that when the quarantine centres have reached their full capacity, the close contacts should be quarantined in designated quarantine facilities for the first 10 days while they could be put under home quarantine for the remaining 4 days on a case-by-case basis.

The Scientific Committees recommended that the entire society should be mobilised to continue to strengthen social distancing measures, personal hygiene (including hand hygiene, cough manner, wearing a mask when having fever or respiratory symptom, etc) and environmental hygiene measures as far as practicable to minimise the further spread of the disease locally.

As some of the cases of novel coronavirus present with mild symptoms, in order to detect mild cases in the community and to have a better understanding of the epidemiological situation, members recommended that the enhanced surveillance be expanded from inpatient to outpatient settings.

LegCo to deal with urgent questions on the novel coronavirus outbreak in Hong Kong

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) will hold a meeting on Wednesday (February 19) from 11am to 2pm in the Chamber of the LegCo Complex. The President of LegCo has given permission for Ms Alice Mak and Dr Kwok Ka-ki to ask, under Rule 24(4) of the Rules of Procedure, urgent questions in relation to the novel coronavirus outbreak. The items originally to be dealt with at the regular Council meeting of February 19 will be carried over to a future Council meeting.

The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk). Members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website. To observe the proceedings of the meeting at the LegCo Complex, members of the public may call 3919 3399 during office hours to reserve seats.

S for S speaks on arranging Hong Kong residents under quarantine on board Diamond Princess cruise back to Hong Kong

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at a media session at the Hong Kong International Airport this afternoon (February 17):

Reporter: Can you give your statement in English please?

Secretary for Security: We care for and are concerned with the well-being of the Hong Kong residents who are now kept on the Diamond Princess cruise, so we are very serious about the operation to evacuate those who are now on board the ship. Once they have been cleared by the Japanese authorities in regard to the blood test, they will be released on the 19th (of February), which is Wednesday. We have made our demands to Japan and we will reiterate our demands and further request for these Hong Kong people that once they are allowed to disembark, then they should be transported immediately to the

airport, so that we will arrange them to get on board our chartered flight.

We have arranged two chartered flights ready to take them to leave Japan on the 19th (of February), so that they can come back to Hong Kong on the 20th (of February). After their arrival at Hong Kong, they will be sent to quarantine camps for 14 days' quarantine. This is done in accordance with the advice of the experts and according to the analysis about public health requirements. I advise all Hong Kong residents to take these chartered flights, so that they will all come back together to go through the procedures for their own health reason and for the protection of other people. It is important for them to know that if they do not take our chartered flight on this occasion, there will likely be a lot of difficulties for them to get back to Hong Kong because they have been on board this cruise, and it is a very open knowledge that people on this cruise will have to go through this quarantine procedure, so they will be encountering all sort of difficulties including hotels and flights.

The second thing is when they come back to Hong Kong, they are very likely that they will go through the same procedure. Our port health officers will examine each and every one of them. They are known on our immigration list, so that they will be questioned once they arrive at Hong Kong. We have arranged two chartered flights, each has over 400 seats, so there will be very sufficient space for the Hong Kong people to get on our flights. Of course there are special seating arrangements to ensure that it will conform with the health safety standard. We know that there will likely be about 350 Hong Kong people including 260 Hong Kong permanent residents and another 90 who may be holding foreign passports. We also learn that there are five Macao citizens on board the cruise, so if they want to join our flight, then we will entertain them, so that when they arrive in Hong Kong, they will be dealt with according to the wish, probably to be conveyed back to Macao.

Today we sent off the first forward action team comprising about 30 people belonging to the Security Bureau, the Immigration Department and the Department of Health. Once they arrive, they will be in touch with the Chinese embassy, who will be helping us to make our demands and also make the arrangements for the Hong Kong people to leave (for) Hong Kong. This operation has received the support of the Central Government, the foreign office, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in Hong Kong and also the Chinese embassy. A lot of places and governments will be asking the Japanese authorities for different arrangements, so it is important that we go early and make our requirements loud and clear, so that the arrangements can be made as quickly as possible.

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

CHP investigates three additional cases of novel coronavirus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 8pm today (February 17), the CHP is investigating three additional cases of novel coronavirus infection, taking to 60 the number of confirmed cases so far in Hong Kong.

The first case involves a 69-year-old man (the 58th case) with underlying illnesses who lives in Yee Ching House, Yee Ming Estate, Tseung Kwan O. He developed cough on February 8 and consulted a private doctor three times between February 8 and 13. He sought medical attention at Cheung Sha Wan Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic for persistent cough on February 15. He consulted the same private doctor again yesterday (February 16) for shortness of breath and was referred to Caritas Medical Centre and admitted for medical treatment. His respiratory samples were tested positive for novel coronavirus and he is now in a stable condition. The patient had no travel history during the incubation period. His home contact is asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The second case involves a 45-year-old man (the 59th case) who is the colleague of the 54-year-old male patient of the 57th case confirmed yesterday. The patient has good past health who lives in Oi Wah House, Tsz Oi Court, Tsz Wan Shan. He developed fever and sore throat since February 12 and consulted a private doctor on February 13. He sought medical attention at Queen Elizabeth Hospital yesterday and was admitted for treatment. His respiratory samples were tested positive for novel coronavirus and he is now in a stable condition. The patient travelled to Da Nang, Vietnam during the incubation period (from January 30 to February 1). The patient lives with his wife and three daughters, who are all asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The third case involves a 46-year-old woman (the 60th case) who is the wife of the 57th case confirmed yesterday. The patient has good past health who lives in Ming Kung Mansion, Taikoo Shing. She developed runny nose since February 8 and cough since February 10. She consulted a private doctor on February 10 and was referred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for admission and treatment by the CHP yesterday. Her respiratory samples were tested positive for novel coronavirus and she is now in a stable condition. The patient had no travel history during the incubation period. According to the patient, she attended a church activity at a church in Shau Kei Wan with her husband on February 9.

Relevant contact tracing by the CHP is ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "According to our preliminary epidemiological investigations, some of the confirmed cases are locally infected. The CHP strongly urged 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."

The spokesman said, "On the 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. The public should go out less and reduce social activities, and maintain appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible."

"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); after using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP will report the case to the World Health Organization, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province and Health Bureau of Macao.

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 annex.

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 15 130 calls were received.

A dedicated webpage (www.gov.hk/ncv) has been set up by the CHP. Information including the latest local situation, list of buildings and list of flights/trains/ships relevant to the confirmed cases, countries/areas with reported cases as well as health advice and a "Novel Coronavirus Infection Local Situation Interactive Map Dashboard" are available on the webpage to help the public grasp 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;
- 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.

The public should take heed of the health advice below when travelling outside Hong Kong:

- Do not travel to Hubei Province where community transmission of novel coronavirus is occurring;
- Avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms in countries/areas with possible community transmission of novel coronavirus infection. 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.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected](#)

liquid cocaine (with photo)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs today (February 17) seized about 1.7 kilograms of suspected liquid cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$1.8 million at Hong Kong International Airport.

A male passenger arrived in Hong Kong from Amsterdam, the Netherlands today. During Customs clearance, two liquor bottles containing suspected liquid cocaine were found inside his check-in suitcase. He was then arrested.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities effectively.

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).

