

CHP carries out port health inspection work on World Dream cruise

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 5) said that subsequent to the notification of confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection involving eight travellers from the Mainland who took the World Dream cruise from January 19 to 24, the CHP's Port Health Division is sparing no effort in carrying out the port health inspection work on the cruise.

Personnel of the Port Health Division have been assessing the health condition of over 1 800 passengers and over 1 800 crew members on board through health declaration and temperature checking. As of 9pm, 33 crew members of the cruise claimed to have developed upper respiratory tract infection symptoms. Among them, three crew members reported to have developed fever were sent to hospital for isolation and management.

Samples were collected from all crew members reported to have symptoms for testing on novel coronavirus. Currently, relevant test results showed that the respiratory samples of 32 crew members concerned were tested negative for novel coronavirus while that of the remaining one is pending.

The CHP said that relevant health inspection work is ongoing due to the large number of people on board. All passengers and crew members are required to stay on board prior to completion of the health inspection and permission by the DH.

The CHP also urged members of the public who took the cruise from January 19 to 24 and arriving Hong Kong on January 24 to call the CHP's hotline 2125 1122 which operates from 8am to midnight daily.

Transcript of remarks of press conference (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference this afternoon (February 5). Also joining were the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan; and the Chief Port Health Officer of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, Dr Leung Yiu-hong. Following is the transcript of

remarks of the press conference.

Reporter: Thank you. Hello again, Mrs Lam. Could I ask you please to answer this general political question? Aren't you open to the accusation of always running behind this outbreak that if you had acted sooner, then Hong Kong would have been safer? And how worried are you now – the direction of this outbreak in this territory might end up with Hong Kong being in the same kind of isolation trouble that the Mainland of China is? Two American airlines have already cancelled flights. Taiwan, the Philippines are, you know, closing their borders to you. So how worried are you that this might well end up with Hong Kong in isolation? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, as I have said in my introductory remarks, since we were first notified of this virus in the last month or so, we have been very vigilant in monitoring the situation, taking into account the advice of my in-house experts as well as external experts who were subsequently appointed to the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel towards the latter part of January. We have taken into account all these factors in making sure that the strategy remains one to prevent and to reduce the chances of this infection in Hong Kong and also to adopt the measures which are most needed at every stage of the situation, because the situation changed, as the Director of Health has just explained to you. So it is not entirely appropriate to say that one was behind or one was ahead of the various timelines in order to introduce the effective measures.

The second thing is about whether I am worried or we are worried. I suppose everybody in Hong Kong should be worried about the situation in Hong Kong. In my concluding remarks just now, I made a strong appeal that, first, let's have confidence in Hong Kong. We have a very robust public health system, we have excellent medical and health personnel. I should add that we also have adequate public resources and we have a population which has gone through several of these infectious diseases, so they should be more alert to the various precautionary measures that the Centre for Health Protection has asked them to comply with. This is a time really for social cohesion for getting our act together in order to fight this disease.

One of my expert advisers was a former Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization, Professor Fukuda. In my meeting with him over this period, especially yesterday, he made a very strong point that in every society, every community, in order to combat a public health crisis, it requires society to put aside their differences in order to act together. You can imagine if we roll out one measure after another, including controlling the border points, reducing traffic or now going for mandatory quarantine, if members of the community refuse to comply or refuse to adopt the various precautionary measures and still want to go out and interact, that would create difficulties for our fight against this disease. I remain optimistic that with the favourable circumstances, the experience that we have gained in the past, that we should be able to fight this together. But here I make another very sincere appeal that this is really the time for us to put aside our differences to act together in order to overcome this public health crisis.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, do you think that your way of tackling the virus is more reactive than proactive and preventive, and how exactly are you going to quarantine potentially tens of thousands of people coming back from the Mainland? And why do you think that this would be a more effective and feasible way of tackling the outbreak of the virus than closing the border completely? And secondly, just yesterday you said that officials can only wear masks when necessary, and I see that some officials present here today are wearing masks and some are not wearing masks. Can you explain why?

Chief Executive: I forgot to answer your second question when it was asked by another reporter friend here. In our internal guidelines and also in guidelines issued by the World Health Organization or by our own Centre for Health Protection, there are circumstances which individuals are advised to wear surgical masks, so it is not a complete ban on wearing of masks. There are circumstances that the advice is to put on a surgical mask, including if that individual is unwell. I'm sorry to see that several of my colleagues are unwell and of course, there may be a case that because they are in frequent interactions in a health setting, so even if they are not unwell, because I've not checked Dr Leung whether he is unwell now, that puts him into that sort of circumstances that he should wear a surgical mask. I think we are acting consistently with the guidelines that we have adopted not only for the Government but for the general population.

The first question about the way that we are tackling this public health situation, as I have said, the public health situation or this virus infection situation is evolving all the time. It started off with something which is entirely unknown, so even in early January when we amended or when we made a regulation under the Prevention and Control of Diseases Ordinance, we didn't even know that it is coronavirus. We just put in a term to try to describe this very unknown virus that was hitting the Mainland of China and also Hong Kong and other places all over the world. The situation is one that is evolving, so our strategy is really to monitor very closely the situation, taking into account the scientific evidence, the expert advice of my in-house colleagues as well as external experts and to devise the most suitable strategy and measures that will help us to tackle the situation. We have not shied away from introducing these effective measures, so you may remember that on one occasion, I think two days ago, I said you should not be surprised if you would be seeing me again within a very short period of time because we need to have a speedy response to the changing circumstances. I don't want to particularly describe how well my Government has been doing, but certainly we are acting in accordance with a strategy which is to protect the safety and the health of Hong Kong.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, you highlighted the need to reduce contacts in the community and you announced earlier that civil servants will work from home until February 9. It's only a few days away from that day. Will you extend further that arrangement? And second question is, a friend of my colleague, who is a public hospital doctor, said the isolation ward in Princess Margaret Hospital had been occupied. Are there any other measures the Government is going to adopt to handle this? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you very much for the question. Yes, we need to enhance social distancing as this is one of the important strategies, now especially we are seeing some community-based infection. I am not yet in a position to announce the exact arrangements for civil service after this week, but it is likely that we will have to extend it, but again it is a matter of balancing because many people in Hong Kong or many operation of businesses still require some very essential and basic services. But as I now see it, because I said the next two weeks will be rather critical, so there is a high chance that we will have to extend this work-from-home arrangement and we will announce it as soon as possible.

As far as the isolation ward in Princess Margaret Hospital, in fact it is not just isolation ward. The Hospital Authority has been under extreme pressure in almost everything, in terms of facilities, manpower, and supplies in the protective equipment including surgical masks. So we are doing whatever the Hospital Authority needs, to help them to overcome this shortage, and that's why I really make an appeal that staff of the Hospital Authority at this very critical juncture and very challenging times should continue to support the Hospital Authority as well as other healthcare professionals who are now working so hard in order to ensure the provision of services. But whether we have very specific proposals to tackle the isolation facilities, I'll see whether Professor Chan has something to add to that.

Secretary for Food and Health: As far as the current isolation facilities are concerned, the occupancy is about 40 per cent. Other than the Princess Margaret Hospital's ID Block, i.e. the Infectious Disease Block, there are also other isolation facilities in a number of hospitals under the seven clusters of the Hospital Authority. This is something that obviously the Hospital Authority is looking at, by almost real-time monitoring to see how they can work towards tackling the increasing number of cases. On the other hand, in order to relieve the capacity of the Hospital Authority, in particular the Accident and Emergency Departments, they are quite ready to embark on the running of the designated clinics because we are seeing cases in the community that may not have previous travel history. There may be cases of infections in the community already. In order to further reduce the risk of community transmission, it is important for the Hospital Authority to continue to contain the situation and have an early identification of the cases. The designated clinics will be tackling cases of milder situation so as to allow the hospitals especially the Accident and Emergency Departments to treat and deal with the more severe cases and also the suspected cases. The objective of designated clinics would be able to find or identify some of these cases in the community that may have the virus, so as to reduce the risk of community transmission. We will be having more details for all of you about the designated clinics. The Hospital Authority is ready, but then we would have to look into when is the best time to execute or start the running of the designated clinics. We will be having further information tomorrow.

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



Public Hospital Services Affected HA Calls on Employees to Resume Duty

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) said that continuing industrial action has seriously affected certain emergency and essential services of public hospitals.

As at 7pm today (February 5), a preliminary counting by the HA indicated more than 5 100 employees were absent from duty, including about 300 doctors, 3 100 nurses and 1 000 allied health professionals.

Other severely affected departments include the Neonatal Intensive Care Units, the Accident & Emergency (A&E) Departments, Obstetrics & Gynaecology(O&G) Departments and Cardiac Catheter Laboratory services.

HA Chief Manager (Cluster Performance) Dr Ian Cheung said, "Regarding O&G services, some elective cesarean operations need to be deferred. Emergency Medicine Wards in a few A&E Departments need to be closed owing to insufficient manpower. Elective percutaneous coronary intervention in a hospital cluster needs to be reduced by half."

The HA Major Incident Control Centre will continue to closely monitor the situation of the operation of public hospitals. Dr Cheung appeals to colleagues to return to work as soon as possible to provide services to patients in need and join hands in fighting the epidemic. He also thanked the staff who have stayed on duty and being deployed to cope with the extra workload caused by the strike.

CHP investigates three additional cases of novel coronavirus infection (2)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 8pm today (February 5), the CHP is investigating three additional cases of novel coronavirus infection, taking to 21 the number of confirmed cases so far in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "According to our preliminary epidemiological investigations, some of the confirmed cases are believed to be 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 first two additional cases involves a 56-year-old woman and her 28-year-old daughter who are respectively the wife and daughter of the patient of the 17th confirmed case. The patients, with good past health, live in Yue Hong House, Hong Tin Court in Lam Tin. The 28-year-old female patient developed cough and sore throat on January 30, and then fever on January 31. She was sent to the United Christian Hospital (UCH) and admitted for treatment yesterday. Meanwhile, her mother presented with fever yesterday and was also sent to the UCH for treatment. The patients' respiratory samples were tested positive for novel coronavirus. They were transferred to the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) for further management today. They are both in a stable condition.

The CHP has immediately commenced epidemiological investigations and conducted relevant contact tracing. Preliminary investigations revealed that the 28-year-old female patient had consulted two private doctors between onset and admission to hospital. According to the patients' information, the daughter had no travel history during the incubation period and mainly travelled between her home and her workplace in Tsim Sha Tsui. Her mother also did not have any travel history during the incubation period and mainly

travelled between her home and her workplace in Tuen Mun.

The third case involves a 56-year-old man with good past health who resides in Block 1, Villa Esplanada in Tsing Yi. He developed fever, cough with sputum and sore throat since January 30. He consulted a private doctor on February 2 and then attended the PMH on February 4 where he was admitted for treatment. His respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus. He is now in a stable condition.

According to the patient's information, he worked in Shenzhen and last visited Shenzhen on January 21. He visited Tokyo in Japan from January 28 to February 1. His wife is symptomatic and was sent to PMH for treatment. Quarantine will be arranged for his other home contacts, namely his parents and domestic helper, who are asymptomatic.

The patient took a flight from Hong Kong to Tokyo on January 28 and returned from Tokyo to Hong Kong on U0651 by Hong Kong Express Airways on February 1. Passengers on board the returning flight concerned and the taxi driver who drove the patient from the Hong Kong International Airport to his home in Villa Esplanada, Tsing Yi at around 1am on February 2 are urged to call the CHP hotline.

The CHP will report the cases 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. The CHP is also closely monitoring and following up on the contact tracing of relevant confirmed cases in the Mainland and overseas. 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 4 744 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.

Hong Kong residents returning from the Mainland should take note of the following health advice:

- Members of the public returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland should stay home as far as possible if circumstances allow. Those who need to go out should wear a surgical mask for 14 days after returning to Hong Kong;
- Hong Kong residents who have visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days

should wear a surgical mask immediately and approach staff of the DH's Port Health Division upon arrival. They will be quarantined for observation after a health assessment.

- Hong Kong residents who had been to Hubei Province in the past 14 days but have already returned to Hong Kong should wear a surgical mask immediately and call the CHP hotline for arrangement to be quarantined for observation.

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.
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Suspected MERS case reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 5) reported a suspected case 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 case is detailed below:

Sex	Female
Age	62
Affected area involved	Jordan
High-risk exposure	Nil
Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital
Condition	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Negative

Separately, the CHP reported that the suspected MERS case pending results yesterday (February 4), upon preliminary testing, tested negative for MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

"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](#).