

# CHP provides latest information on pneumonia cases of novel coronavirus infection in Mainland

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 20) provides the latest information on the pneumonia cases of novel coronavirus infection detected in the Mainland again. The public is again urged to maintain strict personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

According to the information from the Beijing Municipal Health Commission, three additional pneumonia cases of novel coronavirus infection were reported in Beijing today. The patients, comprising two males and one female, had either visited or resided in Wuhan. Two of them are in stable condition while one is in critical condition. So far, a total of five confirmed cases have been reported in Beijing.

Meanwhile, Shanghai Municipal Health Commission reported its first pneumonia case of novel coronavirus infection today. The case involved a 56-year-old woman coming from Wuhan. She is in a stable condition.

Separately, the Health Commission of Guangdong Province reported that an addition of 13 pneumonia cases of novel coronavirus infection were reported today, with eight in Shenzhen, three in Zhuhai and one each in Zhanjiang and Huizhou. The patients comprised 8 males and 5 females. Eleven of them had history of living in or travelling to Wuhan while two had close contacts with confirmed patients. Among the new cases, four are in serious condition and two are in critical condition. No fatal cases have been recorded. So far, a total of 14 confirmed cases have been reported in Guangdong.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "The CHP will continue to maintain its liaison with the National Health Commission, the World Health Organization and the relevant overseas health authorities, and closely monitor the situation for risk assessment."

The spokesman reminded the public to avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms in countries/areas with possible transmission of the 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.

A dedicated webpage ([www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html)) has been set up by the CHP to provide relevant information and health advice on Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent. Information on the affected countries/areas is available from the following webpage: [www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statistics\\_of\\_the\\_cases\\_novel\\_coronavirus\\_infection.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statistics_of_the_cases_novel_coronavirus_infection.pdf).

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- 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;
- 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:

- Avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms in countries/areas with possible transmission of the 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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## Second meeting of the Banking Sector Coordination Mechanism to support small and medium-sized enterprises

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism convened by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) held its second meeting today. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB), 10 major banks active in SME lending and HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI). In addition to following up on the progress of the measures proposed at the first meeting, the second meeting discussed other ways to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including specific arrangements targeting individual sectors. The following are the key points discussed:

1. Banks attending the meeting are committed to using the capital released by the 0.5 percentage point reduction in the countercyclical capital buffer ratio announced by the HKMA in October 2019 to actively support the financing needs of SMEs. Despite the current uncertain economic outlook, the SME facility limits granted by the 10 banks participating in the mechanism grew by HK\$2.7 billion – or 0.6 per cent – in the fourth quarter of 2019.
2. After the HKMA clarified its supervisory guidelines on "rescheduled loans", the banks attending the meeting have started to help SMEs facing financial difficulties relieve their cash flow pressure by restructuring the repayment schedule or extending the loan tenor. Since mid-October 2019, the banks have approved more than 40 such applications with an aggregate amount of over HK\$1.5 billion.
3. To address possible concerns on the part of SMEs that requesting loan restructuring could lead to their being labelled as financially unsound, some banks have proactively offered to delay principal repayments or extend loan tenors for SME borrowers in the transportation, retail, catering and tourism sectors, which are the sectors most affected by global economic uncertainty and recent events in Hong Kong. Other banks attending the meeting indicated that they will consider adopting similar practices to strengthen support for their SME customers.
4. HKMCI launched the 90 per cent Guarantee Product under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) on December 16, 2019, after funding was granted by the Legislative Council. As at January 15, 2020, HKMCI had received 82

applications, of which 42, totalling HK\$82 million, have been approved. At present, 15 banks, including nine of those attending the meeting, are already accepting applications for the 90 per cent Guarantee Product. The remaining bank attending the meeting will introduce the product in February this year. 2 700 applications for the 80 per cent Guarantee Product were approved in 2019 (a year-on-year increase of 60 per cent) resulting in HK\$13.8 billion of loans (an increase of 89 per cent).

5. In order to better align with the 90 per cent Guarantee Product, which waives the financial statement submission requirements on smaller-sized enterprises, newer businesses, and professionals seeking to set up their own practices, the HKMCI has made corresponding adjustments to the 80% Guarantee Product to streamline the application procedures. The banks indicated that they are supportive of these adjustments and, in order to handle loan applications from SMEs in a more flexible manner, will consider accepting other forms of financial proof in lieu of financial statements as appropriate, having regard to the borrower's situation.

6. Apart from previously-announced guarantee fee subsidies, interest rebates and handling fee waivers applicable to the SFGS, most banks will introduce plans to lower or waive low-balance fees and account opening charges for SME clients. They will also continue to evaluate other measures to help SMEs reduce their expenses.

7. A few companies in the retail sector have indicated that some merchant acquirers have been withholding customer credit card payments for longer than in the past. In response, the HKMA conducted a survey and found that, other than a handful of occasions where merchant acquiring banks lengthened or shortened the withholding period based on changed customer business conditions, they have generally not extended the withholding period for any given sector. The SME Lending Coordination Mechanism calls on all bank and non-bank merchant acquirers to strike a balance between risk management and being supportive to SMEs and, as far as possible, not to extend the credit card payment withholding period for SMEs in the current economic environment. In order to reduce the cash-flow pressure on retail businesses, some banks attending the meeting have introduced loan products such as credit card receivables financing and unsecured loans. Other banks will actively consider launching similar products to support their customers in the retail sector.

8. For the transportation sector, government policy allows public light buses (PLB) operators to upgrade their vehicles from 16 seats to 19 seats. Some PLB operators indicated that they encountered difficulties in obtaining refinancing from banks for this purpose. At the meeting, the HKMA clarified that banks should exercise flexibility in handling refinancing applications from PLB operators who aim to upgrade to 19-seat vehicles, and may depart from the 85 per cent LTV ratio guideline as long as prudent risk management principles are applied and such refinancing loans are for purchases of new vehicles. Banks attending the meeting understood and were supportive of the HKMA's clarification.

9. To strengthen communication with SMEs, the HKMA will, in collaboration

with HKAB, the Innovation and Technology Bureau and HKMCI, hold briefing sessions for SMEs to explain banks' lending policies and the SFGS schemes, and to collect their opinions on Government's SME support policies.

The Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism was established on October 16, 2019 by the HKMA to provide a common platform for the banking industry to formulate solutions to support SMEs.

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## **Hong Kong Police Force fully cooperates with IPCC Study**

In relation to an interview with a former member of the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) published in a local Chinese newspaper yesterday (January 19), a Police spokesman gives the following response today (January 20):

Since the IPCC commenced a study on the public order events since June 9, 2019, the Police Force has been maintaining close liaison with the IPCC and has professionally facilitated every aspect of the work of the IPCC Special Task Force, including the provision of required documents, answering their enquiries as well as arranging interviews with specific Police commanders, etc.

Police regret that the content of the interview may lead to misunderstanding that Police have not been fully cooperative with the IPCC in its study. Police reiterate that it will continue to fully cooperate with the IPCC Special Task Force in all aspects of its study.

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## **InvestHK announces core events of extended StartmeupHK Festival 2020 (with photos)**

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) today (January 20) announced details of next month's [StartmeupHK Festival](#), its influential annual showcase of what's new and what's next in the world of start-ups. Entering its fifth year, the StartmeupHK Festival this year has been extended to six days and features seven core events that will present the latest ideas, trends and innovation

to an audience from around the world.

The key themes this year include changing lifestyle and retail and logistics innovation technology, smart city, artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, e-sports, property tech, environment and sustainability, developing entrepreneurial talent through education and incubation, investing in start-ups, and co-innovation between start-ups and corporates. The event will also see the finals of the global Jumpstarter and WHub start-up pitching competitions.

The StartmeupHK Festival 2020 will run from February 10 to 15 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai and, on its final day, in Tsuen Wan. An international mix of more than 300 speakers from 54 countries or territories will discuss their experience and know-how in a range of panel sessions, fireside chats, keynotes and presentations. The festival attendance is set to exceed 17 000 delegates.

The signature event will be the [StartmeupHK Forum](#) on Day 2, co-hosted by InvestHK and Alibaba Entrepreneurs Fund, when high-profile speakers in keynotes and fireside chats will shine a light on the city's investment landscape for start-ups and scale-ups, solving some of the world's most pressing environmental issues and empowering women in innovation.

"This year's festival is set against a backdrop of remarkable growth in Hong Kong's start-up ecosystem. It demonstrates the city's appeal as a place for start-ups and how welcoming it is to them," Associate Director-General of Investment Promotion at InvestHK Mr Charles Ng said. "The number of start-ups in 2019 reached 3 184, up 21 per cent year on year. Importantly, the number of people working in the start-up sector grew 31 per cent to 12 478."

Citing InvestHK [research](#) on the city's start-up ecosystem, Mr Ng pointed out that about a third of the start-up founders are from outside Hong Kong, with the United States, Mainland China and the United Kingdom being the leading three places of origin.

Day 1 (February 10) will feature the [Connected Cities Conference](#), hosted by KPMG, which will focus on innovations for the next generation of city living. Global and regional speakers from academia and business and leading entrepreneurs will showcase examples of a number of smart and connected cities and technologies from around the world including artificial intelligence and data analytics to enhance a city's liveability, workability and sustainability. A new thought leadership survey report will be launched to provide insights on the future of Hong Kong as a smart city.

Days 2 and 3 (February 11 and 12) will combine three major offerings: [Jumpstarter](#), organised by Alibaba Entrepreneurs Fund; [Connected Retail Experiences](#), organised by Bailey Communications; and InvestHK's above-mentioned [StartmeupHK Forum](#).

Jumpstarter is a two-day event that's both a global pitch competition involving start-ups from around the world that will have its grand finale in

the event and also a first-of-its-kind start-up conference focused exclusively on advocating entrepreneurship, showcasing quality start-ups and providing high-impact networking opportunities among start-ups, investors and corporates. It will include keynotes, panel discussions, experiential zones and workshops.

Connected Retail Experiences is a two-day conference for retailers and brand owners who recognise the rapidly changing nature of retail and are looking for solutions to help them reposition their business. It will look at the technology and innovation behind seamless branded retail experiences across all channels, along with how retailers are able to harness the power of data lakes of information that they hold about their customers' purchasing habits.

On Day 4 (February 13) is the [Lifestyle Tech Conference](#), hosted by Jumpstart Media, in which attendees can learn about trends from the most promising start-ups, investors, corporates and change makers disrupting peoples' bodies, purchases, downtime, technologies and aspirations, and necessities. It will provide new meaning to everyday life and key insights into the way we live. There's also the opportunity to check out the start-up zone and test gaming skills in the e-sports corner.

Day 5 (February 14) will have the [Startup Impact Summit 2020](#), hosted by WHub. As the event title suggests, this is about creating impact, and the summit will bring together the local and international tech communities for a related showcase. It will condense 365 days of start-up life into one day, with multiple tracks, stages, workshops and resources for start-ups to scale their business. The summit this year will feature a brand new global start-up competition, co-organised by AngelHub and WHub, which will bring together prominent start-ups, investors and corporates across Europe, the Middle East and Africa as well as Asia.

Alongside its Startup Impact Summit, WHub will also launch a new white paper that focuses on the start-up ecosystems in the 11 cities that combine to form the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

This year's StartmeupHK Festival has an extra day on February 15 that will take delegates away from the main venue in Wan Chai to Tsuen Wan, where the [Ecosystem Summit](#) hosted by the Mills Fabrica will take place. This half-day event will focus on ways to foster and grow the start-up ecosystem in Hong Kong and globally. A series of panel sessions and roundtables will look at developing entrepreneurial talent through education and incubation, transforming corporates through innovation, and taking Hong Kong start-ups global and promoting the city as a global innovation hub.

The Head of StartmeupHK at InvestHK, Ms Jayne Chan, said, "Our need for technological solutions for global challenges has never been greater. This year's extended programme spotlights the latest technologies and innovations that are improving lives in a sustainable way, and hopefully contributing in the bigger picture. The festival looks at the way we live our lives and offers a real variety of ideas and technologies that can help us to do things



better. It will showcase how Hong Kong as a leading innovation hub globally, playing its part in creating a better, smarter world."

To follow the latest start-up developments in Hong Kong, please go to the website [www.startmeup.hk](http://www.startmeup.hk).

#### About InvestHK

InvestHK is the department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government responsible for attracting foreign direct investment and supporting overseas and Mainland businesses to set up or expand in Hong Kong. It provides free advice and customised services for overseas and Mainland companies. For more information, please visit [www.investhk.gov.hk](http://www.investhk.gov.hk).



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## [LegCo Panels elect Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen](#)

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

Legislative Council Secretariat (LegCo) announced today (January 20) that 18 panels of LegCo have elected their Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen for the 2019-2020 session. Details are available in the Attachment.



For membership of the Panels, please visit the LegCo Website ([www.legco.gov.hk/general/english/panels/pan1620.htm](http://www.legco.gov.hk/general/english/panels/pan1620.htm)).