

LC Urgent Q1: Issuing expeditiously guidelines on treating viral pneumonia

Following is an urgent question by the Hon Alice Mak under Rule 24(4) of the Rules of Procedure and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

Recently, several dozen cases of viral pneumonia have occurred in Wuhan. As the cause of the disease is unknown, quite a number of Hong Kong people are in panic. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of the disease's latest pathological information that it has grasped so far (including the causes of the disease, symptoms, transmissibility and treatment methods), and whether it will expeditiously issue to healthcare personnel work guidelines on treating such disease and provide them with adequate protection measures?

Reply:

President,

The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health received notifications from the National Health Commission (NHC) on December 31, 2019 and January 3 and 5, 2020 respectively regarding the cluster of pneumonia cases recently identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province. According to the NHC, a number of viral pneumonia cases with unknown cause have been identified through disease surveillance since December 2019. Symptoms were mainly fever while a few had presented with shortness of breath.

According to the latest information available, there was a total of 59 cases, with no fatal cases (as of January 5, 2020). At present, all patients are receiving treatment in isolation, while 163 close contacts are under medical surveillance. So far none of them have developed abnormal symptoms such as fever. The tracing of close contacts is still ongoing. Epidemiological investigations reveal that some patients are business operators at a seafood market in Wuhan. So far, investigations by the Mainland authorities found no evidence of definite human-to-human transmission and no healthcare workers have been found infected. While the causative pathogen and cause of infection are still under investigation, respiratory pathogens such as influenza viruses, avian influenza viruses, adenovirus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome have been ruled out as the cause.

First of all, I would like to reiterate that no serious pneumonia case related to those in Wuhan has been detected in Hong Kong so far. Due to the frequent flow of travellers between Hong Kong and Wuhan, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region attaches great importance and stays alert of the latest situation of the cluster of pneumonia cases in

Wuhan. In tackling the outbreak, the Government adopts three principles, namely making prompt responses, staying alert and working in an open and transparent manner. In fact, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) has held a number of meetings with relevant policy bureaux, departments, the Hospital Authority (HA) and experts over the past week (since December 31, 2019) to examine the prevention measures taken in Hong Kong in response to the cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, Hubei Province. Relevant departments have also been reminded to increase their vigilance and be well-prepared to ensure that relevant contingency measures could be implemented as early as possible when necessary to safeguard public health. Besides, the FHB has held a number of press conferences to provide the public with immediate updates on the development of the disease and the work of the Government. The Government's work in response to the disease includes:

(1) strengthen health measures at ports, as well as various government venues and facilities;

(2) launched on January 4, 2020 the Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance, with the Serious Response Level activated with immediate effect;

(3) published in the Gazette today an amendment to the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) (the Ordinance) to include "Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent" as a statutorily notifiable infectious disease set out in Schedule 1 of the Ordinance through the Prevention and Control of Disease (Amendment) Regulation 2020 and the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 1) Notice 2020, thereby vesting the Department of Health with the statutory powers to, among other things, put the contacts under quarantine and isolate the infected patients;

(4) activated the Serious Response Level in public hospitals on January 4, 2020, and the HA has implemented a series of response measures to enhance monitoring and infection control in public hospitals and clinics;

(5) enhance risk communication at all fronts including all local stakeholders, Mainland authorities and the World Health Organization.

I will introduce the measures in detail in my oral reply to the urgent questions.

Regarding the Hon Alice Mak's question, while there is currently no full understanding of the cause of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, the HA's frontline healthcare staff would provide appropriate treatment having regard to the clinical condition and testing results of patients, and would carry out response measures with the availability of further information. The HA's frontline healthcare staff would conduct risk assessment on its patients in accordance with its the HA's established clinical criteria, i.e. fever, travel record, occupation, contact history and whether there is clustering phenomenon. The HA has reminded frontline healthcare staff to pay special attention. Patients with the presentation of fever and acute respiratory infection or pneumonia, who have been to Wuhan within 14 days before onset of

symptoms, would immediately be sent to negative pressure isolation room for treatment. Airborne, droplet and contact precautions would be implemented on these cases, and healthcare staff would wear appropriate personal protective equipment with regard to relevant precautionary measures.

Masked rioters block road in Tseung Kwan O

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

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

At around 10pm today (January 8), masked rioters have gathered in the vicinity of Sheung Tak Plaza and Kwong Ming Court in Tseung Kwan O. They blocked road using barricades built with rubbish bins and furniture, paralysing traffic.

Police warn them to stop all illegal acts and will take enforcement action.

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cocaine (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (January 7) seized about 1 kilogram of suspected cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$1 million at the Hong Kong International Airport.

A male passenger arrived in Hong Kong from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia yesterday and was about to depart to Macao. During customs clearance, the batch of suspected cocaine was found concealed inside the trolley frames of his two check-in suitcases. The man was then arrested.

The arrested man, aged 25, has been charged with one count of trafficking in a dangerous drug. He will appear at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (January 9).

Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance. The department

will also further step up enforcement actions before the Chinese New Year holiday with a view to combat transnational drug trafficking 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).



[CE visits Food and Environmental Hygiene Department contract cleaning workers \(with photos/video\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, visited the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)'s contract cleaning workers working in Mong Kok today (January 8), expressing her gratitude for their hard work and relentless efforts for Hong Kong.

Mrs Lam met and spoke with about 50 cleaning workers to learn more about their working conditions. Presenting them with cookies, Mrs Lam thanked them for their efforts during the recent months when violent clashes broke out frequently in Mong Kok. She noted that they had cleared barricades and objects on roads through the night so that basic cleaning work could be completed before large numbers of members of the public went out in the morning. In addition, in response to the cluster of pneumonia cases detected in Wuhan, Mrs Lam said the Government is stepping up its cleaning work for public facilities to safeguard public health and appealed for assistance by the cleaning workers.

Mrs Lam said the Government attaches great importance to the well-being

of grass-roots workers, and pointed out that she announced in her Policy Address in 2018 improvement measures for the tendering of government service contracts to enhance protection for the rights and interests of outsourced non-skilled employees. The new measures include increasing the technical weighting in marking schemes and raising the weighting for wage levels in technical assessment. Tens of thousands of workers can also enjoy three new benefits, namely entitlement to a 6 per cent contractual gratuity after working for 12 consecutive months, statutory holiday pay upon employment for one month and remuneration at 1.5 times the wage for work performed when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is in force.

Mrs Lam said, "the new measures were scheduled to come into effect in April in 2019 following their announcement in 2018, but taking into account the opinions of people concerned about labour welfare, I decided to extend the measures to cover contracts tendered out between October 10, 2018, when the Policy Address was announced, and March 31, 2019, so that nearly 10 000 more workers could also benefit."

Mrs Lam said she was pleased to note that since the implementation of the new measures, the hourly rates for government outsourced contract workers have substantially increased. For example, the monthly salary of the FEHD's cleaning workers has increased by 22 per cent when compared to the wage level at the end of 2018. The Government will pay attention to the implementation of the new measures and will continue to explore further room for improvement.



[Missing woman in Mong Kok located](#)

A woman who went missing in Mong Kok has been located.

Hung Chiu-kam, aged 73, went missing after she left her residence on Waterloo Road on January 5 night. Her family made a report to Police on January 6.

The woman on was located on Metropolis Drive, Hung Hom yesterday

(January 7) in the morning.