

CHP investigates one additional confirmed case of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health announced that as of 0.00am, April 21, the CHP was investigating one additional confirmed case of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 705 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 704 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported case is an imported case.

A total of 172 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (April 7 to 20), including 39 local cases (including 1 possibly local) of which 15 are from unknown sources.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to the compulsory testing notice. The Regulation also requires all household members of close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test within a specified period according to compulsory testing notices published in the Gazette. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop and undergo testing as soon as possible.

The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk).

The CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also 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). After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, 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 performing 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 doorknobs, 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 litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) 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.

LCQ18: MTR Kwun Tong Line and Tseung Kwan O Line

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that the loadings of MTR Kwun Tong Line (KTL) and Tseung Kwan O Line (TKOL) during morning and evening peak hours have reached saturation. Also, with a number of developments along KTL being completed one after another, the train compartments of KTL as well as the station concourse and train platforms of Kwun Tong (KT) Station during peak hours are increasingly crowded. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows, in respect of the critical links of (a) KTL and (b) TKOL, the average hourly carrying capacities and actual patronages, as well as the loadings calculated respectively on the bases of six persons and four persons (standing) per square metre, during morning and evening peak hours (i) in each of the past four years and (ii) from January to March this year;

(2) whether it knows the respective hourly passenger flows during morning and evening peak hours at the (a) entrances/exits and (b) train platforms of KT Station (i) in each of the past four years and (ii) from January to March this year;

(3) whether it has assessed if, in the coming five years, the carrying capacity of KTL can cope with the transport needs arising from the increased population along the railway line; if it has, of the assessment outcome; if not, whether it will conduct such an assessment immediately and publish the relevant data;

(4) given that the Government has proposed to construct an elevated landscaped deck of about 120 metres in length to link up KT Station with adjacent new developments, of the projected (i) increase in passenger flows that the station concourse and train platforms of KT Station can accommodate as compared with the current levels, and (ii) extent to which the crowdedness of the train platforms of the Station will be alleviated as compared with the current situation, upon the completion and commissioning of the deck; whether the Government will consider extending the existing train platform of KT Station; and

(5) whether it knows the anticipated increase in the train frequencies and carrying capacities of KTL and TKOL upon the service commencement of the new signalling systems of the two railway lines in 2026-2027; the measures put in

place by the MTR Corporation Limited to increase the carrying capacity of KTL before the service commencement of the new signalling system?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and relevant bureau and department, my reply to the Hon Luk Chung-hung's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) In general, the highest passenger loading of a railway line occurs during the morning peak hours when more passengers travel around the same time. The travelling pattern of passengers in the evening peak hours is relatively more dispersed, hence the peak loading is usually lower in the evening peak hours than that in the morning peaks. As such, when evaluating the service demand for individual railway lines, the MTRCL will assess the most crowded scenario for the railway line concerned mainly on the basis of the passenger loading during the morning peak hours.

The carrying capacity and loading during the busiest hour in the morning per direction for critical links on the Kwun Tong Line and Tseung Kwan O line are set out in the Annex.

Carrying capacity and loading of railway lines are effective indicators commonly used for measuring levels of railway services. As regards the design and arrangement of various "hardware" components (including platforms and station entrances), they will be designed and constructed in such a way as to ensure adequate capacity to handle passenger flow. The MTRCL will flexibly implement passenger flow control measures in the light of volume of passenger traffic, including changing the entry and exit arrangements of ticket gates, adjusting the upward or downward direction of escalators between the concourse and the platform, and implementing one-way passenger flow at station entrances, so as to alleviate bottlenecks at certain locations in concourses or platforms to ensure that the station is kept in good order.

It was observed that Exit A of Kwun Tong Station has a higher passenger flow during peak hours. In December 2018, additional ticket gates were installed at this exit to divert passenger flow. Moreover, additional staircase and lift between the concourse and the platform are being retrofitted at Kwun Tong Station to ease congestion during peak hours. The relevant works are scheduled for completion in the fourth quarter of 2023.

(3) With the gradual development and transformation of Kowloon East into the second core business district of Hong Kong, there is progressive rise in the residential and working population in the area. Various government departments have been striving hard to provide comprehensive railway and road infrastructural facilities and appropriate public transport services including franchised buses and green minibuses to cope with the traffic demand in the area. The MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the carrying capacity of the overall railway network including the Kwun Tong Line and make timely adjustment to train services in light of changes in patronage to meet

passenger demand.

(4) The Government has proposed to construct an elevated landscaped deck of about 120 metres in length to link up Kwun Tong Station with the two new developments in the vicinity, so as to enhance pedestrian accessibility in the area, provide pedestrians with more convenient facilities and better direct passenger flow between Kwun Tong Station and neighbouring facilities. In the future, passengers may travel between Exits C and D of Kwun Tong Station via the deck and reach the existing walkway that leads to Yuet Wah Street, thereby reducing passenger flow in the station. The Civil Engineering and Development Department is commencing relevant investigative study and planning work.

On the proposed expansion of Kwun Tong Station platforms, according to the MTRCL's assessment, existing platforms have enough capacity to handle the projected patronage in the future. Besides, platform expansion works would disrupt the existing operation of the station, bringing risk to railway services and safety.

(5) The MTRCL is gradually replacing the signalling systems of seven railway lines (Tsuen Wan Line, Island Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tseung Kwan O Line, Disneyland Resort Line, Tung Chung Line and the Airport Express). Upon completion of the project, it is expected that the overall carrying capacity can be increased by about 10 per cent.

Before the commissioning of the new signalling systems of various railway lines, the MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the patronage of the lines, and adopt a multipronged approach to improve passenger flow and enhance passengers' travelling experience, including flexible adjustment of train service, strengthening of passenger flow control measures, and improvement of the station layout in the light of changes in patronage.

[LCQ13: Proper carriage of loads on vehicles](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

Under regulation 57 of the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), the driver of a motor vehicle on a road shall ensure that any load is properly secured to and contained on or inside the vehicle. However, it has been reported that from time to time, there have been instances in

which loose loads (e.g. sand, ballast and miscellaneous objects) not properly covered with a cover fell from dump trucks and grab-mounted trucks onto roads, thus endangering the safety of other road users. In addition, some persons-in-charge of works, in order to save cost, have used dump trucks instead of tanker trucks of an enclosed design for carrying mud, resulting in mud spilling onto roads. There are also instances of foul water seeping from refuse collection vehicles while travelling, causing pollution to the environment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of complaints or reports about the presence of miscellaneous objects on roads received by the Government in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by District Council district;

(2) of the Government's current procedure for clearing miscellaneous objects on roads, and the average expense of each operation;

(3) of the number of prosecutions instituted by the Government in each of the past three years against drivers by invoking the aforesaid provision;

(4) of the publicity efforts made by the Government in the past three years on promoting the practice of proper carriage of loads to members of the transport sector and other stakeholders, so as to reduce instances of miscellaneous objects and contaminants falling from vehicles onto roads; and

(5) whether it will step up law enforcement actions against the aforesaid unlawful acts and raise the relevant penalties, so as to enhance road safety?

Reply:

President,

The Government all along attaches great importance to road safety, as well as the road safety and environmental pollution problems caused by moving vehicles with loads that are not properly contained or secured.

Having consulted the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police), the Highways Department (HyD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Transport Department (TD), my reply to the various parts of Hon Wilson Or's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) According to the established mechanism, apart from arranging its contractor to clear debris and rubbish from road surfaces of high speed roads on a daily basis, HyD also carries out regular road maintenance inspections for high speed roads and general roads. If HyD discovers or receives reports about any obstacles on these roads affecting the safety of road users, staff will be deployed to carry out the clearance work as soon as possible.

Separately, FEHD is responsible for providing general street cleansing services, including street sweeping, refuse collection and street washing. If discarded waste is found, FEHD will arrange to remove the waste, with assistance from the Police or other departments depending on the

circumstances so as to ensure that its staff (including those of its contractors) carry out the work under a safe environment.

The above-mentioned scavenging services are undertaken as part of various departments' normal duties and the expenditure involved has been included in the associated recurrent expenses. Furthermore, the departments do not maintain records on the number of public reports or complaints related to the presence of miscellaneous objects on carriageways.

(3) Under the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), the driver shall ensure that any load is properly secured to or contained inside the vehicle and that its weight and manner in which it is placed in the vehicle shall not cause danger to any person. Any driver who contravenes the relevant regulation is liable to a fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for three months on first conviction; and to a fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment for six months on second or subsequent convictions. The Police is responsible for law enforcement on related contraventions. In 2018, 2019 and 2020, the number of enforcement actions taken by the Police against insecure loading under section 57 of Cap. 374G were 1 321, 962 and 962 respectively. The Police does not maintain relevant prosecution figures.

(4) and (5) Apart from the above-mentioned Cap. 374G, in accordance with the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation (Cap. 132BK), FEHD may take enforcement actions against vehicles that cause littering (including dripping of waste water from vehicles) on any street or public place.

In addition, under the Waste Disposal (Designated Waste Disposal Facility) Regulation (Cap. 354L), a refuse collection vehicle with rear compactor entering/leaving landfills or refuse transfer stations must be equipped with a metal tailgate cover and a waste water sump tank of suitable construction and in good working condition so as to prevent the spilling of refuse and waste water during transportation. Also, under the Air Pollution Control (Construction Dust) Regulation (Cap. 311R), when a vehicle leaves a construction site, the load of dusty materials shall be covered entirely by clean impervious sheeting to ensure that the dusty materials would not leak and pollute the environment while moving.

Apart from governing the use of vehicles for carriage of loads under the law and stepping up enforcement actions, the Government attaches great importance to raising awareness of safe driving and environmental protection among the transport and waste collection trades, and drivers of refuse collection vehicles and dump trucks. In particular, when transporting construction waste, sand, soil and refuse, all loads shall be properly secured and covered, and appropriate measures shall be taken to prevent dripping of wastewater, posing safety hazards to other road users and contaminating the roads. In this respect, TD has been launching publicity and educational activities through various channels. To enhance the goods vehicle trade's awareness of safe loading, TD has compiled a "Code of Practice for the Loading of Vehicles" in accordance with section 109 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) after consulting the goods vehicle trade. The Code provides guidelines covering various areas of safe loading, including the use

of suitable vehicles for carrying loads, proper methods of placing loads inside vehicles, etc. TD also issues the "Goods Vehicle Trade Newsletter" on a quarterly basis and holds regular meetings with the goods vehicle trade to disseminate the message of road safety and remind them to adopt good practice for transportation of loads. In addition, through conducting regular Landfill Users Liaison Meetings, EPD has also appealed the transport trade to keep adopting good practices and complying with the relevant statutory requirements so as to prevent potential environmental hygiene and road safety problems caused by vehicles transporting waste.

The Government will continue to promote safe loading on various fronts, including law enforcement, publicity and education. The Government will also timely review the relevant legislations to ensure that their penalty levels have adequate deterrent effect, with a view to reducing road safety and environmental pollution problems caused by moving vehicles with loads that are not properly contained or secured.

LCQ12: Projects receiving the funding support of the Innovation and Technology Fund

Following is a question by the Hon Chung Kwok-pan and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Dr David Chung, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

The Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel announced in December last year that it had launched with a non-profit-making organisation, H&M Foundation, a five-year collaboration plan, which involved a study on superabsorbent polymer, and the relevant testing would be conducted by a garment manufacturer in India. The collaboration plan has received the funding support of the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the details of the aforesaid study, and the amount of public funding involved;
- (2) whether it has assessed the benefits of the study in terms of promoting the sustainable development of Hong Kong industries (especially the textile and fashion industries);
- (3) whether the Government, when vetting and approving the funding application concerned, required that the testing relating to the study be

conducted by local enterprises or enterprises in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), so as to promote re-industrialisation in Hong Kong and seize the opportunities brought by the development of the Greater Bay Area; and

(4) whether it will stipulate that all research and development work for projects receiving the funding support of the ITF must be conducted locally or in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

The Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) administered by the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) has been financing projects that contribute to the innovation and technology upgrading in the manufacturing industry and the services industry. Currently, there are 17 funding schemes under the ITF, among which the platform projects under the Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP) supports applied research and development (R&D) projects undertaken by the local public research institutes and universities, with a view to transferring the R&D results to local industries. At least 10 per cent of the total project cost is required to be sponsored by the industry. The intellectual property (IP) rights of the R&D results are owned by the applicants.

In recent years, the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) has been actively developing textile recycling and high-performance textile technologies as well as exploring the ways to mitigate the impacts of textile production and apparel manufacturing on the environment. The HKRITA has been conducting platform R&D projects with industry sponsorship in recent years, including research on the ways to recycle textile waste; and in 2018, development of the technologies to turn textile waste into Cellulosic Superabsorbent Polymer (SAP). SAP is an ideal agricultural water retention agent for maintaining a high soil humidity even in arid condition. It has great potential for increasing the yield of natural textile materials, thereby helping promote sustainable development.

The reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) to (3) The "Development of a Pilot Scale System for the Production of (Fertiliser-containing) Cellulosic SAP" is a platform R&D project. Approved in 2020, the two-year project aims to develop a system for the mass production of SAP. The applicant is the HKRITA. Two local companies and one non-local company provide industry sponsorship, and H&M Foundation, a non-profit making organisation, provides technical advice. The project cost amounts to about \$5.18 million, comprising of about \$4.12 million funding from the ITF and about \$1.06 million from industry sponsorship. The industry sponsorship represents over 20 per cent of the project cost, which is above the required level of 10 per cent. As mentioned above, the IP rights of the technologies developed under this project is vested with the HKRITA.

Majority of the R&D work of the project would be conducted in Hong Kong, mainly in the HKRITA's laboratories in the Hong Kong Science Park. The project also includes a small scale plantation experiment in Hong Kong. While part of the experiment needs to be conducted in south-western India to facilitate the conduct of irrigation experiment in places with relatively extreme climatic conditions (such as arid regions) to grow fine natural textile materials. The experiment concerned was conducted with the assistance of the non-local sponsor at no cost.

The HKRITA will, through licensing of patents, let the Hong Kong industries adopt the new technology. If the relevant material is successfully developed under the project, it could recycle textile products and mitigate the harmful effect of textile waste on the environment, as well as help maintain humidity in the soil and reduce water consumption during irrigation on the other, which will bring positive impact to the sustainable development of the whole textile industry.

In fact, the HKRITA has established strong collaborations with local and Mainland (especially the Greater Bay Area) enterprises. The sponsors and supporting parties of many projects are local or Mainland enterprises.

(4) In general, the majority of R&D work under an approved the ITSP project should be conducted within the territory of Hong Kong. However, given the close ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland, up to 50 per cent of R&D work of projects under the ITF can be conducted (and relevant expenditure incurred) in the Mainland. Where certain R&D tasks need to be conducted outside Hong Kong (other than the Mainland), prior approval from the ITC must be sought.

LCQ8: Development of an Islamic financial market

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip Lau Suk-yea and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

In 2007, the then Chief Executive mentioned for the first time in his Policy Address the introduction of Islamic finance and the development of an Islamic bond (sukuk) market in Hong Kong. To this end, the Government amended the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112) and Stamp Duty Ordinance (Cap 117) to provide, for the issuance of sukuks, a tax structure comparable to that for conventional bonds. Subsequently, the Government issued three tranches of USD-denominated sukuks in September 2014, June 2015 and February 2017

respectively. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the development of the Islamic financial market in Hong Kong since the issuance of the third tranche of USD-denominated sukuk; Hong Kong's market share in global Islamic financial activities and the annual changes in such market share, in each of the past three years;

(2) of the challenges, according to the Government's latest evaluation, that it needs to face in developing an Islamic financial market in Hong Kong; Hong Kong's competitive edges, as compared with the neighbouring regions (e.g. Singapore), in developing an Islamic financial market;

(3) of the details of the Government's latest plans to strengthen market infrastructure, nurture talents, encourage product development and foster cooperation with other Islamic financial markets, for the purpose of developing an Islamic financial market in Hong Kong; and

(4) whether the Government has formulated quantitative performance indicators for the coming 5, 10 and 15 years with regard to its efforts to develop an Islamic financial market in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, our consolidated reply to Hon Mrs Regina Ip is as follows:

Over the past few years, to promote the development of Islamic finance including the sukuk market in Hong Kong, we have taken concrete steps to build a conducive platform for sukuk issuance, including amending our laws in 2013 and 2014 respectively to provide a tax structure for sukuk which is comparable with that for conventional bonds, and to allow for the issuance of sukuk under the Government Bond Programme.

In 2014, 2015 and 2017, three sukuk of different structures and tenors totalling US\$3 billion were issued under the Government Bond Programme to demonstrate to the global market the strengths of our Islamic finance platform, with a view to attracting more issuers and investors to participate in the capital market of Hong Kong. The three issuances have helped to demonstrate the viability of Hong Kong's platform and that our legal, regulatory and taxation framework can readily support sukuk issuances, including sukuk of different structures. We believe that these market development efforts have helped enhance the attractiveness of Hong Kong's sukuk platform vis-a-vis other financial centres in the region. In fact, an array of Islamic financial products and services have been introduced in Hong Kong, including the listing of global sukuk on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Islamic funds and Islamic banking windows.

The future development of the sukuk market is market-driven and depends

on a number of factors, including issuer and investor appetite. Its development in Hong Kong is currently somewhat constrained by the overall market sentiments and demand. However, the global financial market is fast changing. We will continue to monitor the development of the domestic and global Islamic finance market as well as other emerging trends and opportunities in the global financial market, and keep such factors in view in considering the way forward.

We will also continue to strengthen the promotion of the merits of Hong Kong's financial system and market overseas, so as to attract foreign investment or financing activities in Hong Kong. For instance, our Bureau has held a number of online seminars and exchanges through the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (including Toronto, Sydney, New York, San Francisco, Singapore, Indonesia) since the middle of last year. The target participants included market institutions and stakeholders who were interested in taking part in our Muslim financial activities.