

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (March 29), 19 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 11 075 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 661 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 201 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 136 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 22 public hospitals and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, among which 10 patients are in critical condition, four are in serious condition and the remaining 122 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

| Patient condition | Case numbers |
|-------------------|---|
| Discharged | 11055, 11149, 11189, 11203, 11212, 11225, 11233, 11279, 11289, 11333, 11335, 11352, 11365, 11367, 11379, 11389, 11411, 11436, 11440 |
| Critical | 1989, 3496, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 9612, 9907, 10358, 10942 |
| Serious | 6386, 7468, 9055, 10984 |

CHP investigates eight additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, March 29, the CHP was investigating eight additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 455 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 454 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, seven are imported cases and one is a local case with unknown source.

A total of 165 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (March 15 to 28), including 86 local cases of which 19 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.

Total number of cannabis and ketamine abusers increased in 2020

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) noted the local drug situation in 2020 at its quarterly meeting today (March 29). While the total number of reported drug abusers decreased compared to that in 2019, there were increases in the figures for cannabis and ketamine (commonly known as

"K") abusers. Cannabis was also the most common type of drug abused among young people and newly reported drug abusers.

Although the latest figures from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) revealed that the total number of reported drug abusers in 2020 decreased as compared with that in 2019, the figures might have been affected by the COVID-19 situation. Reporting agencies might have come into contact with fewer drug abusers due to the pandemic, and might have taken more time to submit data of drug abusers to the CRDA. The Narcotics Division (ND) and ACAN will pay close attention to the number of reported drug abusers for 2021 and the impact of the pandemic on the figures.

According to the latest figures from the CRDA, the total number of reported drug abusers in 2020 dropped by 4 per cent (from 5 772 to 5 569) when compared with that in 2019. On the other hand, the number of reported drug abusers aged under 21 increased by 6 per cent (from 494 to 525). Among them, students accounted for 35 per cent, higher than the proportion in 2019 at 26 per cent.

The number of reported cannabis abusers continued to increase in 2020, 29 per cent higher than that in 2019 (from 522 to 673). In addition, the number of reported ketamine abusers also went up by 18 per cent (from 423 to 499). The number of reported young abusers of cannabis aged under 21 rose by 17 per cent from 2019 (from 235 to 275), and cannabis was the most common drug abused among young people. The number of young ketamine abusers increased substantially by 69 per cent (from 48 to 81).

The number of newly reported drug abusers in 2020 was 12 per cent lower than that in 2019 (from 1 617 to 1 423). Among them, cannabis was the most common type of drug abused with 444 abusers, 28 per cent higher than 348 in 2019. Moreover, the median history of drug abuse of newly reported abusers (i.e. the time for abusers to be reported to the CRDA by reporting agencies from their first drug abuse) was five years, compared with 5.7 years in 2019, showing that the problem of hidden drug abuse persisted.

The total number of reported psychotropic substance abusers (at 3 409) remained higher than that of reported narcotic analgesic abusers (at 2 842). Heroin continued to be the most common type of single drug abused among all reported drug abusers, but the number of reported drug abusers dropped by 2 per cent (from 2 895 to 2 837) compared to that in 2019. Methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice") was the most common type of psychotropic substance abused, with the number of reported abusers having fallen by 9 per cent (from 1 343 to 1 223).

The CRDA figures for 2020 are available on the website of the ND (www.nd.gov.hk/en/index.htm).

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Donald Li, expressed concern over the increasing number of cannabis abusers. He said, "Cannabis and cannabinoids like tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) are controlled dangerous drugs. Taking cannabis can cause hallucination, IQ loss, anxiety, depression and more. Abusers may

also suffer from amotivational syndrome, losing the drive to do things in which they used to be interested."

He added that products claiming to be composed of pure cannabidiol (CBD) are available for sale in the market. Although CBD itself is not controlled under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO), members of the public should note that CBD products containing any level of THC are regarded as dangerous drugs and controlled under the DDO.

The ND and the Department of Health have jointly issued a note setting out information on CBD products. It is available at www.nd.gov.hk/pdf/CBD_Information_Note_English.pdf.

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Ivy Law, said, "The number of ketamine abusers increased substantially by about 70 per cent last year, and such an increase warrants attention. Ketamine abuse can damage a person's mental health. Prolonged ketamine abuse can result in bladder contraction and even bladder fibrosis. In addition, a study by the University of Hong Kong has shown that some ketamine abusers have suffered from damaged bile duct and, where serious, liver failure."

Members of the public facing drug problems, or coming to know that their family members or friends are having drug problems, can seek help through the ND's instant messaging service 98 186 186 or 24-hour hotline 186 186.

[Appointments to Securities and Futures Appeals Tribunal](#)

Under the authority delegated by the Chief Executive, the Financial Secretary has appointed nine new members and re-appointed 16 serving members to the Securities and Futures Appeals Tribunal (SFAT) from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2023.

The membership of the SFAT for the new term is as follows:

New appointees

Professor Chan Ka-lok
Mr Chordio Chan Siu-ping
Ms Florence Chan Yuen-shan
Ms Lorna Chen Xin
Mr Gary Cheung Wai-kwok
Mr Hamilton Ty Tang
Dr Christopher To Wing
Mr Yip Chai-tuck

Mr Edward Yuen Siu-bun

Re-appointed members

Mr Vincent Chan Chun-hung
Professor Chan Koon-hung
Ms Mable Chan Mei-bo
Ms Yvonne Cheng Wai-sum
Ms Kerry Ching Kim-wai
Ms Cindi Hui Ming-ming
Mr Johnson Kong Chi-how
Mr Nelson Lam Chi-yuen
Mr Peter Leung Ming-hym
Professor Leung Siu-fai
Mr Mak Kwong-fai
Ms Edith Shih
Mr Simon Wong Hin-wing
Mr Jamee Wong Kwok-ching
Ms Amelia Yau Yu-xin
Ms Wendy Yuen Miu-ling

Announcing the appointments today (March 29), a Government spokesman said, "The SFAT provides an effective safeguard to ensure that the relevant regulatory decisions are reasonable and fair. It enhances the accountability of the relevant regulatory bodies."

The Government also paid tribute to the outgoing members. They are Mr Jeffrey Chan Lap-tak, Mr Mohan Datwani, Mr Henry Lai Hin-wing, Dr Billy Mak Sui-choi, Mr Anthony Muh Yi-tong, Mr Gerry Ng Joo-yeow, Mr Roy Tsang Chi-wai, Ms Wendy Tsang Kam-yin and Ms Helen Zee.

"Their service to the SFAT provided an effective safeguard for the proper regulation of the securities and futures industry in Hong Kong," the spokesman said.

The SFAT is a statutory tribunal established under the Securities and Futures Ordinance (SFO). According to the law, the SFAT is chaired by a judge or former judge for hearing appeals against specified decisions made under the SFO by the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC), the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, and the investor compensation company recognised by the SFC. There are currently four chairmen on the SFAT, namely Mr Michael John Hartmann, Mr Michael Victor Lunn, Mr Kenneth Kwok Hing-wai, SC and Mr Garry Tallentire.

Wage and Payroll Statistics for December 2020

Overall Wage and Payroll Statistics

According to the figures released today (March 29) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the average wage rate for all the selected industry sections surveyed, as measured by the wage index, increased by 1.0% in nominal terms in December 2020 over a year earlier.

About 50% of the companies reported increase in average wage rates in December 2020 compared with a year ago. A total of 46% of the companies recorded decrease in average wage rates over the same period. The remaining 4% reported virtually no change in average wage rates.

After discounting the changes in consumer prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index (A), the overall average wage rate for all the selected industry sections surveyed increased by 1.7% in real terms in December 2020 over a year earlier.

As for payroll, the index of payroll per person engaged for all the industry sections surveyed increased by 1.8% in nominal terms in the fourth quarter of 2020 over a year earlier.

After discounting the changes in consumer prices as measured by the Composite Consumer Price Index, the average payroll per person engaged increased by 2.1% in real terms in the fourth quarter of 2020 compared with a year earlier.

The wage rate includes basic wages and other regular and guaranteed allowances and bonuses. Payroll includes elements covered by wage rate as well as other irregular payments to workers such as discretionary bonuses and overtime allowances. The payroll statistics therefore tend to show relatively larger quarter-to-quarter changes, affected by the number of hours actually worked and the timing of payment of bonuses and back-pay.

Sectoral Changes

For the nominal wage indices, year-on-year increases of 0.4% to 2.7% were recorded in all selected industry sections surveyed in December 2020, except the transportation section where a year-on-year decrease of 1.5% was recorded.

For the real wage indices, year-on-year increases of 1.1% to 3.4% were recorded in all selected industry sections surveyed in December 2020, except the transportation section where a year-on-year decrease of 0.8% was recorded.

The year-on-year changes in the nominal and real wage indices for the selected industry sections from December 2019 to December 2020 are shown in Table 1.

As for the nominal indices of payroll per person engaged, the year-on-year changes recorded by different industry sections surveyed in the fourth quarter of 2020 varied. While year-on-year increases ranging from 1.1% to 5.6% were recorded in the industry sections of sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; information and communications; financial and insurance activities; real estate activities; professional and business services; and social and personal services, year-on-year decreases of 0.1% to 10.5% were recorded in the industry sections of manufacturing; import/export and wholesale trades; retail trade; transportation, storage, postal and courier services; and accommodation and food service activities.

For the real payroll indices, year-on-year increases ranging from 0.2% to 6.0% were recorded in the industry sections of sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; import/export and wholesale trades; information and communications; financial and insurance activities; real estate activities; professional and business services; and social and personal services in the fourth quarter of 2020. The other industry sections surveyed recorded year-on-year decreases of 0.1% to 10.2%.

The year-on-year changes in the nominal and real indices of payroll per person engaged for selected industry sections from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the fourth quarter of 2020 are shown in Table 2. The quarterly changes in the seasonally adjusted nominal and real indices of payroll per person engaged between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the fourth quarter of 2020 are shown in Table 3.

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the year-on-year nominal increase in overall wages in December 2020 stayed unchanged from that in September 2020, and was the slowest in nearly 11 years. After discounting for inflation, overall wages showed a larger increase in real terms, due to the decline in the headline Consumer Price Index (A) which reflected the effect of the Government's one-off relief measures in that month.

The year-on-year nominal growth in payroll per person engaged in the fourth quarter of 2020, which also covers discretionary bonuses and other irregular payments, decelerated to the slowest in over a decade. Payroll per person engaged in major sectors showed diverse movements in nominal terms. Specifically, those in transportation, storage, postal and courier services, and accommodation and food service activities continued to decline visibly. On the other hand, those in many other major sectors continued to increase, particularly in social and personal services.

The spokesman added that earnings growth will stay contained in the near term as the economy will take time to recover. The Government will continue to monitor the developments closely.

Other Information

Both wage indices and payroll indices are compiled quarterly based on the results of the Labour Earnings Survey (LES) conducted by the C&SD.

Wage statistics are conceptually different from the payroll statistics. Firstly, wage rate for an employee refers to the sum earned for his normal hours of work. It covers basic wages and other regular and guaranteed allowances and bonuses, but excludes earnings from overtime work and discretionary bonuses, which are however included in payroll per person engaged. Secondly, the payroll index of an industry is an indicator of the simple average payroll received per person engaged in the industry. Its movement is therefore affected by changes in wage rates, number of hours of work and occupational composition in the industry. In contrast, the wage index of an industry is devised to reflect the pure changes in wage rate, with the occupational composition between two successive statistical periods being kept unchanged. In other words, the wage index reflects the change in the price of labour. Thirdly, wage index only covers employees up to the supervisory level (i.e. not including managerial and professional employees), whereas payroll index covers employees at all levels and proprietors actively engaged in the work of the establishment. Because of these conceptual and enumeration differences between payroll and wage statistics, the movements in payroll indices and in wage indices do not necessarily match closely with each other.

It should also be noted that different consumer price indices are used for compiling the real indices of wage and payroll to take into account the differences in their respective occupation coverage. Specifically, the Composite Consumer Price Index, being an indicator of overall consumer prices, is taken as the price deflator for payroll of workers at all levels of the occupational hierarchy. The Consumer Price Index (A), being an indicator of consumer prices for the relatively low expenditure group, is taken as the price deflator for wages in respect of employees engaged in occupations up to the supervisory level.

Detailed breakdowns of the payroll and wage statistics are published in the "Quarterly Report of Wage and Payroll Statistics, December 2020". Users can download the publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp210.jsp?productCode=B1050009).

For enquiries on wage and payroll statistics, please contact the Wages and Labour Costs Statistics Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel.: 2887 5550 or email: wage@censtatd.gov.hk).