

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (December 30), 106 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 7 722 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 691 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 259 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 825 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 23 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 50 patients are in critical condition, 54 are in serious condition and the remaining 721 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	6256, 6565, 6718, 6793, 6800, 6836, 6858, 6861, 6889, 6978, 7128, 7152, 7158, 7212, 7222, 7240, 7382, 7399, 7443, 7444, 7506, 7519, 7577, 7583, 7589, 7592, 7609, 7624, 7633, 7640, 7699, 7702, 7727, 7742, 7748, 7750, 7757, 7767, 7780, 7784, 7806, 7852, 7857, 7860, 7874, 7919, 7922, 7928, 7934, 7941, 7957, 7959, 7974, 7997, 7999, 8003, 8006, 8010, 8012, 8023, 8024, 8035, 8038, 8046, 8073, 8074, 8079, 8083, 8106, 8111, 8122, 8129, 8147, 8151, 8160, 8186, 8197, 8200, 8226, 8244, 8263, 8277, 8281, 8285, 8286, 8334, 8351, 8362, 8385, 8397, 8409, 8431, 8460, 8465, 8468, 8494, 8535, 8551, 8552, 8554, 8574, 8592, 8594, 8613, 8649, 8673
Critical	1989, 3496, 5511, 5735, 5739, 5754, 6125, 6232, 6255, 6386, 6444, 6543, 6545, 6547, 6607, 6754, 6779, 6794, 6817, 6824, 6843, 6913, 6918, 7123, 7172, 7175, 7259, 7323, 7424, 7653, 7680, 7705, 7725, 7980, 8018, 8055, 8078, 8085, 8126, 8235, 8323, 8336, 8384, 8432, 8449, 8452, 8461, 8511, 8561, 8725

Serious	5409, 5723, 5745, 5990, 6258, 6285, 6380,
	6472, 6540, 6681, 6722, 6837, 6850, 6890,
	6920, 6921, 7053, 7071, 7076, 7094, 7106,
	7118, 7127, 7208, 7301, 7305, 7468, 7565,
	7580, 7632, 7635, 7655, 7706, 7741, 7755,
	7775, 7824, 7835, 7882, 7964, 7986, 8002,
	8069, 8148, 8187, 8245, 8354, 8420, 8477,
	8499, 8544, 8558, 8564, 8678

[HA announces passing away of two COVID-19 patients](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority spokesperson today (December 30) announced the passing away of two more patients confirmed with COVID-19 infection today.

A 63-year-old male patient (case number: 6153) with chronic diseases was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital on November 27 due to stroke. He later tested positive for COVID-19. His condition continued to deteriorate and he eventually succumbed at 11.13am today.

In addition, an 89-year-old female COVID-19 confirmed patient (case number: 8545) with terminal illness was admitted to United Christian Hospital on December 24 due to shortness of breath. She later tested positive for COVID-19. Her condition continued to deteriorate and she eventually succumbed at 4.58pm today.

The hospitals are saddened by the passing away of the patients and will offer the necessary assistance to their families.

Including the above two patients, 143 COVID-19 confirmed patients have passed away in public hospitals so far.

[Adjusting measures to assist foreign domestic helpers and employers cope with COVID-19 pandemic](#)

The Government today (December 30) announced adjustments to the measures

for assisting foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) and their employers to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Extension of validity period of existing contracts

The Government will further extend the flexibility arrangement announced on February 4, March 19, June 30 and September 30 to enable employers to extend the validity period of the existing contracts with their outgoing FDHs. For all FDH contracts (including those extended under the previous flexibility arrangement as mentioned above) that will expire on or before March 31, 2021, the Commissioner for Labour has given in-principle consent for extending the employment period stated in Clause 2 of the Standard Employment Contract for a maximum period of three months, on the basis that such variation is agreed upon by both the employer and the FDH.

Based on the experience from the previous flexibility arrangements, a three-month extended period should allow sufficient time for employers to arrange their newly hired FDHs to come to Hong Kong. If a newly hired FDH cannot be arranged to come to Hong Kong within the three-month extended period and the employer needs to continue to employ his/her existing FDH beyond the three-month extended period, the employer should apply for a contract renewal with the existing FDH and further extension of the contract will not be considered. Employers are reminded to make advance preparations to arrange their newly hired FDHs to come to Hong Kong within the three-month extended period of employment of their existing FDHs and/or arrange for contract renewal with their existing FDHs.

Limit of stay of FDHs

The Government announced on March 21, June 30 and September 30 that applications from FDHs to extend their limit of stay (for a maximum period of one month) in Hong Kong as visitors for the purpose of finding a new employer would be flexibly considered. In view of recent concerns about the health risks posed to FDHs staying in boarding facilities and to prevent the abuse by FDHs of the aforementioned facilitation measure to change employers frequently (commonly known as "job-hopping"), the Government decided that FDHs whose contracts are prematurely terminated can no longer apply for extension of limit of stay as visitors; and that, in accordance with the prevailing policy of the Government, FDHs are required to leave Hong Kong upon completion of their employment contract or within two weeks from the date of termination of their employment contract, whichever is the earlier. In exceptional circumstances that warrant special consideration, FDHs may submit to the Immigration Department (ImmD) applications for extension of stay in Hong Kong as visitors.

The ImmD will continue to consider and expedite the processing of employment visa applications submitted by FDHs who are in Hong Kong. At the same time, the ImmD will further combat "job-hopping" and continue to step up scrutiny of the details of applicants, such as the number and reasons for their premature contract termination in the last 12 months. For suspected "job-hopping" cases, the ImmD will refuse the employment visa applications

concerned and require the applicants to leave Hong Kong.

Deferral of home leave

Under the prevailing mechanism, an FDH on a renewed contract with the same employer, or due to start a new contract with a new employer upon the expiry of an existing contract, may apply to the ImmD for deferring home leave for not more than one year after the existing contract ends, subject to agreement of his/her current employer or new employer.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, if an FDH is unable to return to his/her place of origin for home leave within the aforementioned one-year period, he/she may, upon agreement with his/her employer, apply to the ImmD for a further extension of limit of stay until the end of his/her contract such that he/she may take home leave within that period.

If FDHs who have already been granted further extension of stay under the previous flexibility arrangement announced by the Government on March 21, June 30 and September 30 wish to further defer their home leave, they may also apply to the ImmD for a further extension of limit of stay in Hong Kong until the end of their contract such that they may take home within that period.

The Government reminds employers and FDHs that the above flexibility arrangement must be mutually agreed between the employer and the FDH, and that the requirement that FDHs should return to their place of origin for vacation continues to be in place. Employers should arrange their FDHs to return to the place of origin for home leave within the extended limit of stay as far as practicable.

The Government will continue to monitor the situations and review the above measures and flexibility arrangements as and when necessary.

For enquiries on employment rights and benefits, please contact the Labour Department at the dedicated FDH hotline at 2157 9537 (manned by "1823") or by email to fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk. For enquiries on FDH visa applications, please contact the ImmD by calling the enquiry hotline at 2824 6111 or by email to enquiry@immd.gov.hk.

[Hong Kong Customs consecutively detects two cannabis trafficking cases through air parcel and arrests four](#)

adolescents (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 29) detected two cross-boundary drug trafficking cases consecutively through the air parcel channel at Hong Kong International Airport and seized a total of about 3.1 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$700,000. Four adolescents involved in the cases were arrested.

Customs officers yesterday inspected two air parcels, both declared as carrying clothes and Christmas decorations, that arrived from the United States. About 1.5kg and 1.6kg of suspected cannabis buds were seized respectively.

After follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday arrested three males, aged between 12 and 14, suspected to be connected with the first case at a residential premises in Tai Kok Tsui. Regarding another case, Customs officers also arrested a 16-year-old male suspected to be connected with the case at a residential premises in Kowloon City on the same day.

The four arrested males have declared themselves as students.

As the two parcels' packing and concealment methods resembled each other to a large extent, Customs does not rule out that the two cases are connected and is now pursuing in-depth investigations.

Customs appeals to parents to keep an eye on their children's friends in order to prevent children from taking part in drug trafficking activities under peer influence.

Customs also reminds members of the public to stay alert and not to participate in drug trafficking activities for monetary returns. They must not accept hiring or delegation from another party to carry controlled items in and out of Hong Kong. They are also reminded not to carry unknown items for other people, nor to release their personal data or home address to others for receiving parcels or goods.

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.

Under the Ordinance, cannabis and tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) are classified as dangerous drugs. Importation of products (including food or drinks) containing cannabis or THC into Hong Kong is prohibited unless the relevant provisions in the Ordinance are complied with. In order to avoid breaching the law inadvertently, special attention should be paid to the packaging labels of those products.

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).



[Clerical staff member of ICAC tested positive for COVID-19](#)

The following press release is issued on behalf of the Independent Commission Against Corruption:

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has learned that an Assistant Clerical Officer of the Administration Branch has been tested positive for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and is now under medical treatment.

The staff member concerned performed support duties at the ICAC Building in North Point and was not required to be in contact with members of the public. She last went to work on December 17. She is the close contact of a confirmed case but remained asymptomatic at work. Her body temperature was normal when undergoing temperature screening at the ICAC Building.

The ICAC will fully cooperate with the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) in the epidemiological investigation. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the area concerned at the ICAC Building was arranged in accordance with the guidelines of the CHP. ICAC staff members who might have close contacts with the staff member concerned at work have been arranged to work from home as far as practicable and undergo COVID-19 testing.

The ICAC attaches great importance to the COVID-19 epidemic and has reminded all staff members to strictly observe the hygienic measures for infectious diseases provided by the CHP and stay vigilant at all times. Staff members are also reminded to consult a doctor and report to the Commission promptly should they feel unwell.

The ICAC will continue to maintain close liaison with the CHP and cooperate with the Centre in implementing relevant measures.