

Immigration Department reiterates that detention of illegal immigrants, overstayers or persons refused permission to land in Hong Kong is in accordance with the law

An Immigration Department (ImmD) spokesperson today (December 24) reiterated that the department has all along been strictly following the established detention policies, and that illegal immigrants, overstayers or persons refused permission to land in Hong Kong are detained in accordance with the relevant legal requirements and legal principles established by the Court.

According to the prevailing detention policies, while determining whether an individual should be detained, the ImmD will consider all the facts and circumstances of the particular case, including whether the person concerned has committed a serious crime or is likely to pose a threat or security risk to the community if not being detained, and whether there is any risk of the person absconding or reoffending. The ImmD will continue to handle all detention cases in accordance with the relevant legal requirements and prevailing mechanisms. Furthermore, the ImmD will continue to strictly follow the relevant provisions under the Immigration (Treatment of Detainees) Order (Cap. 115E) of the laws of Hong Kong, to ensure that detainees are treated fairly and properly.

The ImmD is aware that the Court of First Instance (CFI) of the High Court dismissed an application for writ of habeas corpus filed by a detainee yesterday. The unsuccessful applicant is now detained at the Castle Peak Bay Immigration Centre (CIC) pending removal. He has applied for leave to bring judicial review against the refusal decisions on his non-refoulement claim.

The CFI considered that the detention in respect of the applicant pending removal is lawful. Although there are a large number of similar applications pending before the Court and it may inevitably take some time for them to be dealt with, the CFI held that there is no reason to believe that the resolution of the applicant's leave application will be unduly delayed. Besides, having regard to the seriousness of multiple offences committed by the applicant including repeated trafficking in dangerous drugs, and his repeated record of jumping bail and failing to report recognisance to the ImmD, the CFI held that it is reasonable for the authorities to come to the view that the applicant does constitute a threat to the community and may reoffend, and there is a risk or likelihood of absconding by the applicant if he is released. The CFI also pointed out that there is no sufficient evidence to show that the applicant did not receive proper medical care during his detention at the CIC. The CFI dismissed the application.

The ImmD emphasised that its staff have all along been performing duties professionally according to the law. In spite of the unfounded accusations against the ImmD made by some individuals or groups in the past, its staff will continue to enforce the law fairly and impartially when performing their duties. In the challenging days ahead, staff of the ImmD will remain undaunted and stand fast at their posts in order to maintain social order and safeguard the public interest.

Hongkong Post welcomes “Implementation Opinions on the Promotion of the Development of Postal Industry of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” formulated by State Post Bureau

â€‹Hongkong Post today (December 24) welcomed the "Implementation Opinions on the Promotion of the Development of Postal Industry of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" promulgated jointly by the State Post Bureau, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Commerce and the General Administration of Customs earlier this week.

The proposals put forth in the Implementation Opinions include establishing a smooth and highly efficient delivery network, assisting the postal administrations of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in strengthening complementarity of advantages in the conveyance and handling of inward and outward airmail, leveraging on the express logistics network of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to give full play to the advantages of land transport through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, reinforcing Hong Kong's status as an international hub for air freight, and assisting in the expansion of import and export business of cross-border e-commerce.

A spokesperson for Hongkong Post said, "The development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area presents key opportunities for the advancement of the postal industry. We have been participating actively in the discussions on promoting the development of the postal industry in the Greater Bay Area, and we will lend our full support in establishing the Greater Bay Area as the leading zone for the innovation and development of the postal industry of our country and as the new impetus for the high-quality development of the postal industry. The Implementation Opinions consider that the postal administrations of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

could enhance their international competitiveness in stages by strengthening their delivery networks, the use of technology and the like, enabling the postal administrations of the three places to basically establish a delivery service system that suits the framework for an international first-class bay area and world-class city cluster by 2025. Hongkong Post welcomes the initiatives proposed."

The Hongkong Post spokesperson continued, "The booming growth of e-commerce has generated demand for cross-border logistics services. We will capitalise on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's advantages as an international aviation and shipping hub and fully support the e-commerce and postal logistics of the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao to go global. Now mail items of China Post can be transported from the Mainland to the Air Mail Centre (AMC) at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) by land, and then redirected to the rest of the world through the aviation network of HKIA. Hongkong Post will also seize the opportunity in planning the redevelopment of the AMC by striving to put in place hardware and software facilities, now under development, that help expand the business opportunities for postal development in the Greater Bay Area."

Hongkong Post's spokesperson added, "We are pleased to see that the State Post Bureau has accepted our proposal to implement single-window customs clearance for mail entering the Mainland, which would facilitate customs clearance and tax payment online for e-commerce express items and enhance customs clearance facilitation to foster e-commerce development further in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao."

Hongkong Post will take an active part in the future discussion of any ad hoc groups, and hopes that the postal administrations of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao could join hands in promoting innovation, co-ordination, green development, opening up and more to achieve the goal of complementing the advantages of each other, establishing a mutually complementary co-operation relationship, and jointly taking forward the postal development in the Greater Bay Area and international postal exchange through in-depth exchange and collaboration.

CHP investigates 71 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 24, the CHP was investigating 71 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 8 425 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 8 424 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, 10 had a travel history during the incubation period.

A total of 1 174 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (December 10 to 23), including 1088 local cases of which 405 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 Annex One 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 the specified venues (Annex Two) under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid test according to the compulsory testing notice. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop.

Regarding the severe epidemic situation, 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, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. 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;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- 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.

Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital announces a patient confirmed preliminarily positive to COVID-19

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital (HKBH) made an announcement today (December 24) regarding an inpatient confirmed preliminarily positive to COVID-19:

A 95-year-old patient of a male rehabilitation ward attended Accident & Emergency Department at Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) due to fever on

December 8. Admission screening of COVID-19 test was arranged for the patient and the result was negative. On December 13, the concerned patient was transferred to HKBH for treatment. Later, he was arranged to take the viral test again due to deteriorating condition. Last night (December 23), the hospital learnt that his latest test result was positive and immediately transferred him to QEH for isolation treatment.

Infection Control Team of HKBH has conducted contact tracing, and nine other patients who had stayed in the same cubicle with the confirmed patient are classified as close contacts and they are required to be quarantined for 14 days. Three of the patients have been discharged and will be followed up by Centre for Health Protection (CHP). Another patient has been transferred to QEH earlier. For the remaining five patients, COVID-19 test was arranged for them and test results are pending. The hospital will closely monitor health condition of the patients concerned.

Staff members working in the ward concerned were equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment in accordance with infection control guidelines and no aerosol generating procedures had been performed during that period. Therefore, none of the staff members is being classified as close contacts for the time being, while contact tracing is still underway.

The hospital has arranged thorough cleansing and disinfection of the wards concerned. The hospital would continue to closely monitor the health of our staff and patients, as well as communicating with the CHP about the latest situation.

United Christian Hospital announces cluster of Multi-drug Resistant Acinetobacter cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for United Christian Hospital (UCH) made the following announcement today (December 24):

A 65-year-old male patient was admitted to the male orthopaedic ward on November 23. His clinical specimen was confirmed to be carrying Multi-drug Resistant Acinetobacter (MDRA) on December 12, without signs of infection. In accordance with the prevailing guidelines, UCH commenced contact tracing in the ward concerned, and four male patients (aged 63 to 79) have been confirmed as being carriers of MDRA. Four of them are currently being treated under isolation with stable condition, while one patient has passed away due

to his underlying illnesses.

Following the activation of the Emergency Response Level in public hospitals, visiting arrangements have been suspended. The following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the ward in accordance with the prevailing guidelines:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the ward concerned;
2. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures; and
3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patients. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.