

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (May 26), three COVID-19 confirmed patients (case numbers: 840, 934 and 1043) were discharged from hospital in the past 24 hours. So far, a total of 1 033 confirmed and suspected patients have been discharged.

At present, there are 659 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 219 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 29 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in seven hospitals, among which one patient is in critical condition (case number: 595), and the remaining 28 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.

Hong Kong Customs uncovers first case using aircraft engine to conceal drugs in detecting largest seaborne cocaine trafficking case since 2012 (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 217 kilograms of suspected cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$246 million from a seaborne container at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound on May 20. This is the first drug trafficking case making use of an aircraft engine uncovered by Customs. The amount of cocaine seized in the case is a record high for a seaborne case since 2012.

Through risk assessment and data analysis, Customs officers selected a 20-foot container declared to contain an aircraft engine arriving from Ecuador for customs inspection. Customs then conducted an initial check on the engine stored in the container with the assistance from Government Flying Service Aircraft engineers and suspected that dangerous drugs were concealed inside the engine.

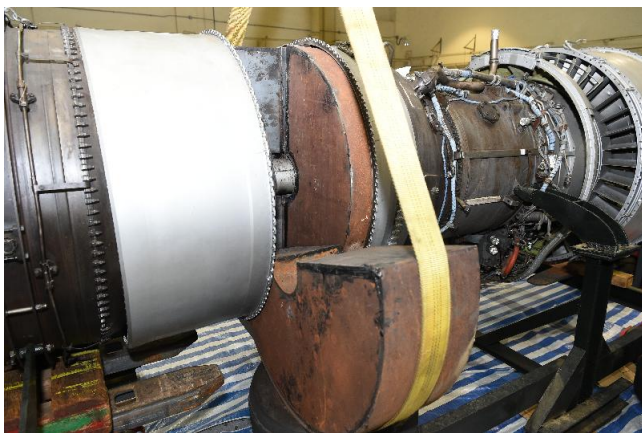
After some of the engine parts had been dismantled, Customs officers found multiple suspicious metal components in the middle of the engine and subsequently seized the batch of suspected cocaine that weighed about 217kg, which was wrapped with soundproof materials and placed in eight metal components.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs said that the multifarious modus operandi adopted by drug trafficking syndicates would not hinder the department from detecting cases. Customs will continue to make use of intelligence analysis, risk assessment and international co-operation to combat drug trafficking activities.

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).



CHP announces no new local confirmed cases of COVID-19 today

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (May 26), no new local confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had been recorded, and that the number of cases in Hong Kong remained at 1 066 so far (comprising 1 065 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives to minimise the risk of infection. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

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."

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to 8pm daily, for public enquiries. As at 3pm today, a total of 122 614 calls had been received.

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 today. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to get information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

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.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, 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 Customs special operation combats unfair trade practices by fitness centre

Hong Kong Customs has mounted a special operation codenamed "Stormbreaker" since mid-May to combat unfair trade practices by fitness centres. One case of alleged aggressive commercial practices in the course of selling fitness services, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO), is now under investigation. A total of over \$900,000 was involved in the service contracts, which is a record amount for one single case involving unfair trade practices by a fitness centre detected by Customs since the TDO was amended in July 2013. Three persons have been arrested so

far.

Customs officers earlier received information alleging that staff members of a fitness centre in Mong Kok imposed undue influence and used aggressive commercial practices when selling fitness services to a customer, forcing the customer to procure the fitness services.

Subsequent to an in-depth investigation, Customs officers took enforcement action from May 22 to yesterday (May 25), resulting in the arrest of one director and two salespersons of the fitness centre whose ages range between 22 and 38.

Operation "Stormbreaker" is ongoing.

The Group Head (Unfair Trade Practice Investigation), Ms Suzette Ip, said at a press conference today (May 26) that Customs will continue to pay close attention to the operation mode and market dynamics of the fitness industry to combat unfair trade practices by fitness centres.

She reminded traders that they must comply with the requirements of the TD0. Consumers are also reminded to procure services from reputable shops, and stay vigilant if they are told to pay by gift card or cash voucher of another shop. They must also firmly refuse to sign any document and make any payment if they do not intend to make a purchase.

Under the TD0, any trader commits an offence of engaging in aggressive commercial practices if harassment, coercion or undue influence is used to impair a consumer's freedom of choice or conduct, causing the consumer to make a transactional decision. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Stressing its priority given to consumer rights protection and zero tolerance for unfair trade practices, Customs pledges that it will continue its stringent enforcement actions against unscrupulous traders.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TD0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, May 26, 2020 is 109 (down 0.2 against yesterday's index).