

Members of public shall pay attention to social distancing during Easter holidays

During the coming four-day Easter holidays, the Government today (April 9) strongly urges members of the public to reduce social contact in order to protect the health of themselves, their families and others.

With a view to reducing the chance of contacting infected persons who may not present any symptoms and minimising the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community, they should:

- â– Stay at home as far as possible;
- â– Stay away from crowded places;
- â– Maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives and avoid social gatherings;
- â– Avoid shaking hands when meeting other people as well as avoid meal gatherings or banquets; and
- â– Postpone any unnecessary meetings or hold meetings by using video-conferencing/other remote communication technologies.

Moreover, some people may have plans for grave sweeping during holidays. The Government urges members of the public to seriously consider postponing such activities so as to protect themselves and their family members from being infected, thereby preventing the spread of the virus in the community.

A Government spokesman said, "The COVID-19 pandemic remains severe around the globe. As of 10am on April 9, the number of confirmed cases reported globally had exceeded 1.4 million. Meanwhile, the number of local confirmed cases as at noon on April 9 had reached 974 (including one probable case), a drastic increase from the number of 454 confirmed cases a fortnight ago. Many of the cases were locally acquired infections without travel history. Hong Kong remains under a public health emergency situation.

'To minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the community, we all need to work together to step up efforts on social distancing. The measures taken by the Government to achieve this include: suspension of classes; work-from-home arrangement for some civil servants; suspension of some public services; and cancellation of Government events."

With an aim to reducing social contact, the Government has put in place the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) to regulate the business and operation of catering business and the premises with relatively high risk of spreading the virus (scheduled premises); as well as prohibit group gatherings with more than four people in public places. The Secretary for Food and Health had earlier issued notices to specify the

relevant requirements. A summary of the notices is at Annex.

The relevant enforcement agencies will conduct inspections and take enforcement actions at various public places as usual during the public holidays, appealing members of the public and the operators of the relevant premises to comply with the requirements of the notices.

Under Cap. 599F, it would be a criminal offence if the persons responsible for carrying on the catering business and the managers of scheduled premises contravene the requirements. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

As at 0.00am this morning, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Police, had initiated three prosecutions to premises suspected of contravening the directions relating to catering business under Cap. 599F. The FEHD, the Department of Health (DH), the Police and the Home Affairs Department (HAD) had conducted 32 141 inspections and issued 1 813 verbal warnings. Regarding the directions relating to scheduled premises, the FEHD, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), HAD and the Police had conducted 2 189 inspections and issued 24 verbal warnings to premises under their purview.

In addition, Cap. 599G stipulates that any person who participates in a prohibited group gathering; organises a prohibited group gathering; owns, controls or operates the place of the gathering; and knowingly allows the taking place of the gathering, commits an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who participate in a prohibited group gathering may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

As at 0.00am this morning, the Police, in accordance with Cap. 599G, had issued 25 fixed penalty tickets to persons participating in group gatherings at public places. DH, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the LCSD, the Housing Department, the HAD, the FEHD and the Police had conducted 17 909 inspections and issued 2 213 verbal warnings under the regulation.

The spokesman said, "Currently, the pandemic remains severe around the globe. Letting our guard down at this critical moment might worsen the situation in Hong Kong. Therefore, we sincerely hope members of the public will cooperate and fight against the virus together."

In order to work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community, 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 door knobs,

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.

Members of the public can visit the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for the latest updates on various news and health advice to grasp the latest information.

Appeal for information on missing woman in Tseung Kwan O (with photo)

Police today (April 9) appealed to the public for information on a woman who went missing in Tseung Kwan O.

Wong Yuk-wah, aged 90, went missing after she was last seen in Po Lam Estate on April 8 morning. Her family made a report to Police on the same day.

She is about 1.66 metres tall, 56 kilograms in weight and of medium build. She has a square face with yellow complexion and short white hair. She was last seen wearing a red vest, a light-coloured long-sleeved shirt, black trousers and black shoes.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing woman or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Person Unit of Kowloon East on 3661 0316 or 9020 2746 or email to rmpu-ke-2@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.



Relief measures: Tax payment deadline automatically extended by three months

The Chief Executive announced yesterday (April 8) that to ease the financial burden and cash flow of businesses and individuals arising from COVID-19, tax payment deadlines for salaries tax, personal assessment and profits tax demand notes for the year of assessment 2018/19 which fall between April to June of this year are automatically extended by three months.

The Inland Revenue Department announced today (April 9) that if taxpayers for salaries tax, personal assessment and profits tax have already settled the first payment in accordance with the demand note for the year of assessment 2018/19, the deadline for the second payment is automatically extended for three months from the date specified on the demand note.

The above relief measure is not applicable to taxpayers who have to settle their tax liabilities before departing Hong Kong, taxpayers paying property tax and taxpayers who have been approved to pay their taxes by instalments.

Relevant examples and FAQ have been uploaded to the website of the Inland Revenue Department (www.ird.gov.hk/eng/tax/extension.htm).

SHA meets sector representatives on enhancing the “Anti-epidemic Support Scheme for Property Management Sector” (with photo)

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, today (April 9) met the representatives from the property management (PM), cleansing and security sectors to listen to their suggestions on the enhancement of the "Anti-epidemic Support Scheme for Property Management Sector" (ASPM) under the "Anti-epidemic Fund".

Legislative Council Member for Architectural, Surveying, Planning and Landscape Constituency and the Chairman of the Property Management Services Authority (PMSA), Mr Tony Tse; the President of the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies, Dr Johnnie Chan; the Convenor of the Hong Kong Services Trade Alliance, Dr Mickey Yan; the President of the Hong Kong Institute of Registered Security Trainers, Mr Justin Wong; member of the PMSA Mr Dick Kwok; the Chairman of Property and Facility Management Division of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, Sr Kays Wong; the Chairman of the Hong Kong Security Association, Mr John Li, and the Chairman of Chamber of Security Industry, Mr Johnny Ho, attended the meeting.

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Mr Lau thanked the sectors for their support to the ASPM. "With the development of the epidemic situation, the frontline PM workers assisting in cleansing and security work in industrial buildings, commercial buildings and shopping malls have also been facing greater public health challenges, and their workload has significantly increased. With a view to benefitting more frontline PM workers and giving recognition to their committed services in this critical period, we are planning to expand the scope of the ASPM to cover industrial buildings, commercial buildings and shopping malls. We will work out the details of the extension taking into account the characteristics of these properties and the principles of 'quick disbursement of funds', 'simplicity' and 'better loose than tight', and will announce the details as soon as practicable," said Mr Lau.

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As of April 9, the PMSA, which has been commissioned to implement the ASPM, has received around 5 500 applications, of which around 925 applications have been approved, involving subsidies of around \$29,000,000 and benefiting around 9 600 building blocks and 6 500 frontline PM workers. Please refer to the website of the PMSA (www.pmsahk.org.hk/en/index.html) for the name of the properties for which applications have been approved.

The application deadline for the ASPM is April 15. Eligible PM companies and owners' organisations which have not applied are reminded to submit their applications to the PMSA as soon as practicable. For details on the ASPM, please contact the PMSA at 3696 1156 or 3696 1166, or visit the website of

the PMSA.



CHP investigates 13 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (April 9), the CHP was investigating 13 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 974 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 973 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Meanwhile, the CHP has been closely reviewing the usage and demand of various quarantine centres (QCs). In view of the rapid development of the COVID-19 epidemic and the relatively high number of close contacts, it is anticipated that the usage of quarantine facilities will remain high. The Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Infection Control under the CHP earlier made a recommendation on the duration of stay of confinees under QCs based on their capacity. Subject to the occupancy of QCs, the confinees at QCs would be quarantined for the first 10 days and be put under home quarantine for the remaining four days when necessary. Having considered the limited available quarantine facilities and the above recommendation, the CHP will implement in phases the arrangement in various QCs starting from April 11 (Saturday), to ensure that there are adequate quarantine facilities to cope with the development of the disease.

The CHP emphasised that all confinees under quarantine at QCs are asymptomatic. After the implementation of the above arrangement, confinees will undergo COVID-19 viral tests before discharge from QCs. Only if they have tested negative and have passed the assessments on their health conditions and other relevant factors by the healthcare professionals to prove that they are deemed appropriate to be put under home quarantine for the remaining four days will such an arrangement be made. QC staff members

will also arrange electronic wristbands for these confinees to comply with the home quarantine requirement before they are discharged from QCs.

The newly reported cases announced today involve eight males and five females aged between 21 and 66. Among them, 10 had travel history during the incubation period and two are overseas students. 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.

The CHP urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. 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.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of the proliferation of the disease and 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 will report the cases to the World Health Organization, the National Health Commission, the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 87 722 calls were received.

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 door knobs, 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.