

Hong Kong Children's Hospital commences inpatient services (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) commenced the phased opening of its inpatient services today (March 27), beginning with paediatric haematology and oncology ward, paediatric intensive care unit and operating theatre services. Ten patients were smoothly transferred from the Children's Cancer Centre of Prince of Wales Hospital to HKCH. The services of the other four centres in public hospitals will gradually be provided in HKCH within this year.

HKCH's specialist outpatient, pathology, radiology and pharmacy services have commenced since December 18, 2018. HKCH is a tertiary referral centre providing multidisciplinary management for complex, serious and uncommon paediatric diseases, including diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation for clinically indicated patients below 18 across the territory. There is no accident and emergency department or general outpatient clinic in the hospital. All patients must be referred by public hospitals or private doctors.



LC Urgent Q1: Tackling the outbreak of measles epidemic

Following is an urgent question by Dr the Hon Elizabeth Quat under Rule 24(4) of the Rules of Procedure and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

Measles is a highly contagious disease which may cause various kinds of complications and even death. It has been reported that the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has confirmed that there is a recent outbreak of measles epidemic. This year up to the present, more than 20 confirmed cases of measles infection have been recorded, and a number of those who have contracted the disease work in the airport. The Director of the Carol Yu Centre for Infection of the University of Hong Kong has pointed out that there may be a second-round spread of measles and the situation is bleak. Regarding the immediate measures to tackle the outbreak of measles epidemic, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that members of the public born before 1967 did not receive measles vaccination in their childhood, whether the Government will immediately conduct measles antibody tests and provide measles vaccination for such members of the public for free; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will immediately request airline companies to step up cleansing and disinfection of cabins of aircraft departing from and arriving in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether CHP will immediately classify the measles response level as "emergency" and announce in a timely manner the latest development of the measles epidemic and the corresponding measures, so as to allay the concern of the public and visitors; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus. It can be transmitted by airborne droplet spread or direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected people, and, less commonly, by articles soiled with nasal or throat secretions. Generally speaking, a patient can pass the disease to other people from four days before to four days after the appearance of skin rash. The incubation period normally ranges from seven to

18 days, but can be up to 21 days. Although there is no specific treatment, drugs may be prescribed to reduce the symptoms of measles, and antibiotics may be used to treat bacterial complications. My reply to the three parts of the question on the control measures taken in Hong Kong is as follows:

(1) Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles. Measles vaccination has been in use in Hong Kong for about 50 years. Since 1967, measles vaccination has been incorporated into the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme, under which a dose of measles vaccine is given to infants aged six months to one year for free. From 1997 onwards, two doses of vaccine are given to children for free, one at one year old and the other at Primary 1. From July to November in 1997, the Department of Health conducted the Special Measles Vaccination Campaign, under which a dose of measles-containing vaccine was given to over a million children and youngsters aged one to 19 (Note) who had not received the second dose of vaccine.

Generally speaking, it is expected that the majority of the people born before 1967 in Hong Kong already have antibodies against measles from previous infections. Those who have received two doses of measles-containing vaccine, including the majority of the people born in 1985 or after and attended primary school in Hong Kong, will normally have sufficient protection against measles.

In fact, the incidence rate of measles in Hong Kong has decreased substantially since the introduction of measles vaccine in 1967. As revealed by the findings of the territory-wide immunisation surveys regularly conducted by the Department of Health, the two-dose vaccination coverage has been consistently maintained at well above 95%, and the local seroprevalence rates of measles virus antibodies reflect that most of the people in Hong Kong are immune to measles. On the whole, the information available indicates that the risk of contracting measles by the general public is considered to be low in Hong Kong. In this connection, the Regional Verification Commission for Measles Elimination in the Western Pacific of the World Health Organization confirmed in 2016 that Hong Kong had achieved the interruption of endemic measles virus transmission.

[Note: Those born between 1978 and 1996.]

(2) To prevent the spread of infectious diseases into Hong Kong, the Port Health Office of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has been carrying out health surveillance at all boundary control points, including the Hong Kong International Airport, seaports and ground crossings, with the use of infrared thermal imaging systems for body temperature checks on inbound travellers. Suspected cases of infectious diseases will be immediately referred by the Port Health Office to healthcare facilities for follow-up. Upon receiving notification of a confirmed measles case, the Port Health Office will notify the airline concerned so that thorough disinfection will be carried out on the aircraft on which the patient travelled.

In response to the recent outbreak of measles at the Hong Kong

International Airport, the CHP has set up vaccination stations at the airport since March 22 to provide vaccination for people working there who are non-immune to measles. The vaccination exercise aims to protect those non-immune to measles. The target groups working at the airport are as follows –

- (a) those born abroad or born between 1967 and 1984 in Hong Kong; and
- (b) those who have not received two doses of measles vaccine; and
- (c) those who have not been infected with measles before.

At the same time, the Airport Authority has immediately stepped up its disinfection and cleansing work in the busy areas of the Terminal Buildings to maintain environmental hygiene.

(3) According to the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), measles is one of the 50 statutory notifiable infectious diseases in Hong Kong. All registered medical practitioners are required to notify the CHP of all suspected or confirmed cases of these diseases for the purpose of disease control. Hong Kong has a well-established notification system of measles, with effective epidemiology and laboratory surveillance. We will take prompt actions in case of cases or outbreak of measles infection. Upon receiving notification of measles cases, the CHP will immediately commence epidemiological investigations to identify potential sources of infection and high-risk exposure, and notify relevant medical facilities and institutions so as to take follow-up investigations and control measures. Besides, the CHP will trace the patients' contacts in order to provide them with relevant health advice and information and put them under medical surveillance. Based on the information obtained after epidemiological investigations, the CHP will timely recommend taking further specific measures to reduce the risk of spreading the disease, including provision of measles vaccination to those who need the vaccination. To keep the public informed of the latest situation, the CHP has been reporting through press releases the latest developments in its investigations into measles cases and the follow-up actions being taken.

[Update on measles cases](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (March 27) investigating five additional cases of measles infection of which three are workers at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA).

As at 4pm today, three cases involving HKIA workers, two males and one female, were recorded. The first case is a 28-year-old man with good past health, who developed fever on March 22 and rash on March 23. He consulted a private doctor on March 23, and sought medical attention at Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital where he was admitted for treatment on the same day. A laboratory test of his respiratory specimen was positive for measles

virus. He is in a stable condition. He reported that he had had measles vaccination and had no travel history during the incubation period or communicable period.

The second case is a 31-year-old man with good past health, who developed fever on March 20 and rash on March 23. He consulted a private doctor on March 23, sought medical attention at Pok Oi Hospital on the same day and was transferred to Tuen Mun Hospital (TMH) for admission and treatment. His respiratory specimen tested positive for measles virus. He is in a stable condition. He reported that he had had measles vaccination and had no travel history during the incubation period or communicable period.

â€‹ The third case involves a 21-year-old woman with good past health, who developed fever on March 22 and rash on March 25. She consulted a private doctor on March 25, sought medical attention at Tin Shui Wai Hospital and was transferred to TMH for admission and treatment on the same day. Her respiratory specimen tested positive for measles virus. She is in a stable condition. She has had measles vaccination and had no travel history during the incubation period or communicable period.

Meanwhile, the CHP is investigating two other case of measles infection. The fourth case is a 43-year-old man, with good past health, who developed fever on March 13 and rash on March 17. He attended a private clinic on March 14. He sought medical attention at St Paul's Hospital on March 17 and 18 and was admitted for treatment on March 18. His respiratory specimen tested positive for measles virus. He is in a stable condition and has already been discharged. His measles vaccination history is unknown. He travelled to Japan during the incubation period but had no travel history during the communicable period.

The fifth case involves an eight-month-old baby boy, with good past health, who developed fever on March 17 and rash on March 20. He attended private clinics on March 17 and 20. He was taken to Prince of Wales Hospital on March 21 for medical attention and was admitted for treatment. His respiratory specimen tested positive for measles virus. He is in a stable condition. The patient is not yet suitable for measles vaccination and travelled to Thailand during the incubation period but had no travel history during the communicable period.

According to the patients, they did not have contact with measles patients during the incubation period. Their home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far and have been put under medical surveillance.

â€‹ Upon notification of the cases, the CHP immediately commenced epidemiological investigations and conducted relevant contact tracing. Initial investigations revealed that no contact has shown measles-related symptoms so far. The public places the patients visited during the communicable period are listed in the appendix.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Since an outbreak emerged at the airport last week, the CHP has attached great importance to infection control

measures at the airport, in particular measles vaccination for people working at the airport who are non-immune to measles."

â€‹ The measles vaccination exercise at the airport aims to protect those working at the airport who are non-immune to measles. The target group refers to people working at the airport who are:

- (1) Non locally-born or born in Hong Kong from 1967 to 1984; and
- (2) Have not received two doses of measles vaccination; and
- (3) Have not been infected with measles before.

â€‹ From today to March 29, the arrangements of the vaccination stations at the airport are as follows:

Venue:	Port Health Office Health Post (South Arrival Apron Passenger Vehicle Lounge, Level 4, Terminal 1)
	Multi-function Room, HKIA Tower (Level 5, Terminal 2)
Hours:	10am to 1pm
	2pm to 5pm
	6pm to 9pm

â€‹ The spokesman said, "The CHP will closely monitor and review the vaccination progress of people working at the airport. We will continue to closely liaise with the Airport Authority to explore ways to further enhance the vaccination arrangements. Arrangements after March 29 will be announced in due course."

â€‹ A total of 885 persons received measles vaccination at the vaccination station as at 5pm today, bringing the cumulative number of vaccinations given to 2,916. A hotline (2125 1122) is set up for public enquiries and operates from 9am to 5.45pm daily. As of 5pm today, the hotline had received a total of 1,458 enquiries.

â€‹ Information on the confirmed measles cases in 2019 with their case summary is uploaded onto the [CHP website](#).

The CHP today had a teleconference with the Health Bureau of the Macao Special Administrative Region to exchange information on the latest measles situation in both places and the prevention and control measures.

â€‹ The spokesman explained, "Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus. It can be transmitted by airborne droplets spread or direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons, and, less commonly, by articles soiled with nose and throat secretions. A patient can pass the disease to other persons from four days before to four days after the appearance of skin rash."

â€‹ The spokesman added, "The incubation period of measles ranges from

seven days to up to 21 days. Contacts who are not immune to measles may develop relevant symptoms, such as fever, skin rash, cough, runny nose and red eyes, in the incubation period. They should observe if they develop such symptoms in the period. If symptoms arise, they should wear surgical masks, stop going to work or school and avoid going to crowded places. They should avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below one. They should also report their symptoms and prior travel history to healthcare workers so that appropriate infection control measures can be implemented at healthcare facilities to prevent any potential spread.

â€‹ "Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles. Members of the public who are planning to travel to places with high incidence or outbreaks of measles should review their vaccination history and past medical history, especially people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received measles vaccination during childhood. The history of measles vaccination in Hong Kong is available in the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). Those who have not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines, who do not know their vaccination history or who have unknown immunity against measles are urged to consult their doctor for advice on vaccination at least two weeks before departure," the spokesman said.

â€‹ Besides being vaccinated against measles, members of the public should take the following measures to prevent infection:

- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, such as after sneezing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Clean used toys and furniture properly; and
- Persons with measles should be kept out of school till four days from the appearance of rash to prevent spread of the infection to non-immune persons in school.

For more information on measles, please visit the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). For news of measles outbreaks outside Hong Kong or the latest travel health advice, please visit the website of DH's [Travel Health Service](#).

Missing man in Western District located

A man who went missing in Western District has been located.

Tan Dexiang, aged 72, went missing after he left his residence on Kwai Heung Street on March 25 morning. His family made a report to Police on the same day.

The man was located in Aberdeen Tunnel today (March 27) afternoon. He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

LCQ3: Proposed amendments to Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance

Following is a question by the Hon Au Nok-hin and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

Hong Kong has currently signed mutual legal assistance in criminal matters agreements and surrender of fugitive offenders agreements respectively with 32 and 20 jurisdictions (not including Taiwan). Recently, the Security Bureau has submitted a proposal to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance, and pointed out that the proposal was triggered by a homicide case in Taiwan involving Hong Kong residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that the Taiwan Shilin District Prosecutors Office has thrice made requests for juridical assistance to the Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government, whether the Government has responded accordingly; if so, of the details, including the policy bureau or government department making the response and the follow-up actions; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether, according to the Basic Law, the SAR Government is required to obtain prior approval from the Central Authorities before it may conduct any negotiation with the Taiwan authorities over the extradition of a suspect; if so, whether the SAR Government has sought approval in respect of the said case; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has assessed if the commencement of the legislative process for amending the aforesaid ordinances will affect the enforcement of the aforesaid agreements signed between Hong Kong and other jurisdictions and cause any jurisdiction to terminate the relevant agreements?

Reply:

President,

The Taiwan homicide case happened in early 2018 which involved a Hong Kong person revealed two practical problems:

(1) Geographical restriction hinders co-operation with some other places outside Hong Kong

At present, the two ordinances, namely the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance, are not applicable to the requests for surrender of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance between Hong Kong and other parts of the People's Republic of China (PRC). We therefore do not have any legislation enabling us to tackle the present Taiwan homicide case. Fugitives from these places, including those from Taiwan, may make use of this loophole to seek refuge in Hong Kong to evade legal responsibility.

(2) Current operation of case-based surrender is impracticable

Under the current mechanism of the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance (F00), case-based surrender arrangements must be given effect through making subsidiary legislation with publication in the Gazette. When the Legislative Council (LegCo) scrutinises a case-based surrender, details of the case would inevitably be publicly disclosed. Even if the personal particulars of the offenders were redacted, given the uniqueness of some case details, such public scrutiny would alarm the offender who would then flee. Further, even if the offender was arrested, he might judicially challenge the authority on the ground that his case details had been divulged and publicly discussed, hence his opportunity for a fair hearing has been compromised.

In addition, F00 stipulates that the relevant procedures and orders (inclusive of the arrest procedure) cannot come into effect before LegCo's scrutiny period expires. So even if a request for individual surrender is received from another place during LegCo's scrutiny (i.e. ranging from 28 to 49 days), nothing can be done in the interim, including any provisional arrest. The fugitive would probably flee during this period, as a result of which no subsequent committal or surrender could ever be executed on him. In brief, the existing arrangement is operationally impracticable and not enforceable. Based on this reason, there has been no case-based surrender arrangement activated in the past 21 years.

In the event that Hong Kong cannot arrest the suspect because of the disclosure of case details, this would affect the arresting actions of the requesting party. Other places may cast doubts on Hong Kong's commitment in combating serious crimes or challenge its ability in doing so.

The Government has therefore proposed the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Bill) to tackle two problems, namely (i) the Taiwan homicide case and (ii) in the

same time plugging the loopholes in Hong Kong's overall co-operation mechanism in criminal and juridical assistance matters. The Bill, together with the relevant LegCo brief, was submitted to the Legco on March 26 and will be gazetted on March 29.

My reply to the three parts of Hon Au's question is as follows:

(1) Hong Kong has communicated with Taiwan regarding the Taiwan homicide case. Between March and December 2018, Taiwan had written to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, requesting information, legal assistance and surrender of the suspect to Taiwan for trial. Following the occurrence of the case, Hong Kong police sent three officers to Taiwan on March 21, 2018 to learn about the situation. In a letter to Taiwan in June 2018, the Hong Kong side informed Taiwan that vigorous actions were being taken for case investigation and evidence collection regarding the crimes committed in both places. In early March this year, Hong Kong conveyed again the intention to commence early liaison with Taiwan on the case. Hong Kong will communicate with Taiwan on the case pragmatically under the principle of mutual respect and solely focusing on the case and its facts. After the legislative amendments are passed, we will then have a legal basis to co-operate with Taiwan, with a view to reaching a case-based arrangement in tackling the homicide case and surrendering the suspect.

(2) There is no long-term legal arrangement between Hong Kong and Taiwan on mutual legal assistance and surrender of fugitive offenders, and the operational requirements of the existing legislation are impracticable. The current legislative proposal is about Hong Kong amending its local legislation, so as to tackle the Taiwan homicide case and remove the loopholes in the mechanisms. The PRC is of course aware of our proposal. There are also media reports on March 16 that a spokesman of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC in HKSAR said that the amendments to the two ordinances aimed at enabling Hong Kong to commence case-based co-operation with jurisdictions which had not established long-term collaboration arrangements with Hong Kong, and that the standards adopted were in line with common practices of surrender for fugitive offenders.

If the Bill is being passed, Hong Kong will have the legal basis to tackle the Taiwan homicide case with Taiwan under a case-based approach.

(3) The Bill proposes, inter alia, distinct differentiation of case-based surrenders from surrenders made under long-term agreements. We have emphasised many times that case-based surrender is a supplementary measure before long-term co-operation arrangements come into effect, and case-based surrender will be adopted only when a jurisdiction does not have any long-term agreement with Hong Kong. Our proposals will not affect any long-term surrender of fugitive offenders agreements in force. It remains the key policy goal of the HKSAR Government to pursue long-term arrangements with other places.