

## Suspected MERS case reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 15) reported a suspected case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit. The case is detailed below:

Sex	Female
Age	58
Affected area involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Nil
Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital
Condition	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Pending

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed fever or lower respiratory symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

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## **Update on cluster of Influenza A cases in Kowloon Hospital**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with Influenza A in a male ward of the Department of Psychiatry, the spokesperson for Kowloon Hospital gave the following update today (January 15):

Six more patients (aged 55 to 86) in the ward presented with upper respiratory tract infection symptoms. Clinical tests were arranged and the test results were positive for Influenza A. The patients concerned are being treated under isolation and are in stable condition.

Admission and visiting have been suspended in the ward concerned. Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

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## **Public consultation on statutory cooling-off period for beauty and fitness services consumer contracts launched (with photo/video)**

The Government released a consultation paper today (January 15) to solicit public views on a proposal to stipulate a statutory cooling-off period for beauty and fitness services consumer contracts. Views collected during the three-month public consultation will help the Government formulate relevant legislative proposals to protect legitimate rights of consumers.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said, "The Government seeks to put in place an effective, transparent and just regime under which both consumers and businesses can enter into trade fairly. Over the years, we have, in light of the latest socio-economic developments, taken steps to improve relevant legislations. The Customs and

Excise Department (C&ED) and the Consumer Council have been combating unfair trade practices and protecting consumer rights through enforcement actions and publicity and education efforts, etc. These efforts have been producing desired results."

Mr Yau said that, the above notwithstanding, complaints involving beauty parlours and fitness centres have continued to surge since the amended Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) took effect in 2013, with the C&ED receiving 1,124 complaints involving suspected aggressive commercial practices (ACPs) up until the end of December 2018. Among the complaints, 374 and 489 are related to beauty and fitness services respectively, making up 77 per cent of all ACP complaints. Most of these complaints involve beauty parlours that offer a variety of beauty services and fitness centres equipped with exercise machines.

Affected consumers felt aggrieved by being pressured or forced into making purchases involving large amounts of pre-payments unwillingly. Some of the traders concerned even targeted disadvantaged groups in the community, aggressively selling their services to and entering into contracts with people who did not comprehend the contents of the contracts. These types of unfair trade practices have given rise to a widespread public outcry, and the community urged the Government to stipulate a statutory cooling-off period for these types of consumer contracts.

The Consumer Council recommended in its Report to Advocate Mandatory Cooling-Off Period in Hong Kong released in April 2018 that the Government should legislate for the implementation of a statutory cooling-off period on certain contracts, including beauty and fitness services contracts. The Panel on Economic Development of the Legislative Council (LegCo) also passed a motion in May 2016 urging the Government to introduce legislation on imposition of mandatory cooling-off periods, and accord priority to implementing a statutory cooling-off period for pre-paid services involving a lot of complaints and large amounts of payment, such as those provided by fitness centres and the beauty industry.

"The Government concurs that, given the seriousness of ACP complaints involving beauty and fitness services, and considering the views from various sectors of the community, it is advisable to examine the proposal for stipulating by legislation a requirement on a cooling-off period in respect to beauty and fitness services contracts. This could target the specified problem and provide the protection where most needed, without affecting Hong Kong's overall business environment," Mr Yau said.

The public consultation paper puts forth specific proposals on the scope of application and operational arrangements of the cooling-off period, which include setting out two options on cooling-off and refund periods. Details can be found in the Annex.

Depending on the outcome of the public consultation, the Government aims to introduce the relevant bill to implement a statutory cooling-off period for beauty and fitness services contracts into the LegCo in the 2019-20

legislative session.

The public consultation paper can be downloaded from the website of the Commerce, Industry and Tourism Branch of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau ([www.cedb.gov.hk/citb/cooling-off](http://www.cedb.gov.hk/citb/cooling-off)). Members of the public may submit their views to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau on or before April 16 by email ([cooling-off@cedb.gov.hk](mailto:cooling-off@cedb.gov.hk)), fax (2869 4420) or post (23/F, West Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong).



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## [CHP investigates influenza A outbreaks at kindergarten-cum-child care centre and primary school](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 15) investigating two influenza A outbreaks at a kindergarten-cum-child care centre in Fanling and a primary school in Kowloon City, and again reminded the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene against influenza.

The outbreak at the kindergarten-cum-child care centre in Fanling affected 24 students including 10 boys and 14 girls, aged 2 to 6, as well as a female staff member. They have developed fever, cough, sore throat and runny nose since January 4. Twenty-three sought medical attention and six of them required hospitalisation for further management. All patients have been in a stable condition. The respiratory specimens of six students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

For the outbreak at the primary school in Kowloon City, it involves 21 boys, aged 6 to 10, who have developed fever, cough, sore throat and runny nose since January 5. All of them sought medical attention but none required hospitalisation. All patients are in a stable condition. The respiratory specimen of one affected student tested positive for influenza A virus upon

laboratory testing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted site visits to both schools and advised the schools to adopt infection control measures against respiratory infections. The schools have been put under medical surveillance.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that children with fever, regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms, should not be allowed to attend school. They should seek medical advice and avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Schools should also measure and record students' body temperature properly."

Schools are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up.

"Hong Kong has entered the 2018-19 winter influenza season. We anticipate that local seasonal influenza activity will continue to rise in the coming weeks and remain at an elevated level for some time. Members of the public should remain vigilant for protection against influenza," the spokesman said.

"Particularly, children, people aged 50 to 64 years, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses who have not yet received influenza vaccination this season are urged to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. They should promptly seek medical advice if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications. Parents and carers are reminded to render assistance in prevention, care and control for vulnerable people," the spokesman added.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).

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## [Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected smuggled smartphones \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs today (January 15) seized 488 suspected smuggled smartphones with an estimated market value of about \$1.6 million at Lok Ma Chau Control Point.

Customs officers today intercepted an outgoing private vehicle at Lok Ma Chau Control Point and found the batch of smartphones in a false compartment in the bottom of the vehicle.

The 49-year-old male driver was arrested. Investigation is ongoing.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

