

Suspected MERS case reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 24) 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	Male
Age	41
Affected area involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Camel ride
Hospital	Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Condition	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Negative

"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 relevant 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](#).

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at beauty parlour

Hong Kong Customs today (December 24) arrested a female director cum salesperson of a beauty parlour suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices involving a misleading omission in the sale of beauty services, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that a staff member of a beauty parlour in Tsuen Wan, in the course of selling a beauty service, had failed to provide the material information to consumers that the location where the relevant services were to be supplied would stop operating in the near future.

After investigation, Customs officers today arrested a 37-year-old female director cum salesperson.

Investigation is ongoing. The arrested woman has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure services at reputable shops.

Under the TDO, any trader who engages in a commercial practice that omits or hides material information or provides material information in a manner that is unclear, unintelligible, ambiguous or untimely, and as a result causes, or is likely to cause, an average consumer to make a transactional decision, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

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

CHP investigates case of severe enterovirus 71 infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (December 24) investigating a case of severe enterovirus (EV) 71 infection, and again urged the public and institutions to maintain strict hand, personal and environmental hygiene.

A male, aged 49 with good past health, had presented with fever,

headache and rash since December 10. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) on December 11 and was admitted for management on the same day. The patient was discharged after treatment and is now in a stable condition.

His stool specimen tested positive for EV71 upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was meningitis.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had travelled to Egypt during the incubation period. His home contact has remained asymptomatic. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"EV71 is one of the causative agents for Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD). The infection is transmitted from person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, fluid from blisters, or the stool of infected persons. Good personal and environmental hygiene are the most important measures to prevent EV71 infection," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"HFMD is common in children while adult cases may also appear. It is usually caused by enteroviruses such as Coxsackie virus and EV71. It is clinically characterised by maculopapular rashes or vesicular lesions occurring on the palms, soles and other parts of the body such as the buttocks and thighs. Vesicular lesions and ulcers may also be found in the oral cavity. Sometimes patients present mainly with painful ulcers at the back of the mouth, namely herpangina, without rash on the hands or feet," the spokesman said.

"The usual peak season for HFMD and EV71 infection is from May to July. A smaller peak may also occur from October to December. As young children are more susceptible, parents should stay alert to their health. Institutional outbreaks may occur where HFMD can easily spread among young children with close contact," the spokesman added.

To prevent HFMD, members of the public, especially the management of institutions, should take heed of the following preventive measures:

- * Maintain good air circulation;
- * Wash hands before meals and after going to the toilet or handling diapers or other stool-soiled materials;
- * Keep hands clean and wash hands properly, especially 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 oral discharges properly;
- * Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as furniture, toys and commonly shared items with 1:99 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite with 99 parts of water), leave for 15 to 30 minutes, and then rinse with water and keep dry. For metallic surfaces, disinfect with 70 per cent alcohol;
- * Use absorbent disposable towels to wipe away obvious contaminants such as respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, and then disinfect the surface and neighbouring areas with 1:49 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite with 49 parts of water),

leave for 15 to 30 minutes and then rinse with water and keep dry. For metallic surfaces, disinfect with 70 per cent alcohol;

* Children with EV71 infection are advised to refrain from going to school or group activities such as parties, interest classes and swimming until two weeks after the fever has subsided, and all the vesicular lesions have dried and crusted, to prevent the spread of disease;

* Avoid going to overcrowded places; and

* Parents should maintain close communication with schools to let them know the latest status of the sick children.

The public may visit the CHP's page on [HFMD and EV71 infection](#) for more information.

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected scheduled dried shark fins (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 23) seized about 200 kilograms of suspected scheduled dried shark fins of endangered species with an estimated market value of about \$120,000 from a container at the Tsing Yi Cargo Examination Compound.

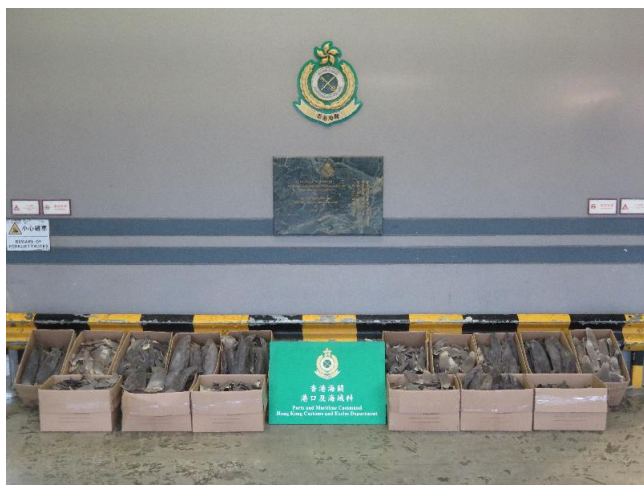
Through risk assessment, Customs officers selected a container arriving in Hong Kong from Sri Lanka for inspection and found the batch of suspected scheduled dried shark fins mix-loaded with another batch of non-scheduled dried shark fins inside the container.

The case has been handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for follow-up investigation.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

Customs will continue to take vigorous enforcement action against different kinds of smuggling activities during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

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).



Surface mail services to certain destinations discontinued

Hongkong Post announced today (December 24) that due to the termination of sea transit operations by some postal administrations, surface mail services to the following destinations are discontinued immediately.

Service type	Destinations
Surface letter	Anguilla; Bhutan; Cayman Islands; Channel Islands; Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands; Kiribati; Maldives; Mariana Islands; Micronesia; Sao Tome and Principe; St Christopher (St Kitts) and Nevis; St Lucia; Tortola; Turks and Caicos Islands; Vatican; and Wake Island
Surface parcel	Azerbaijan
Surface letter and parcel	Caroline Island, Marshall Islands, Timor-Leste