

CHP's response to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries on the quarantine arrangement concerning the 5 217th confirmed case of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), a spokesman for the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 19) gave the following reply:

The 5 217th case involves a 25-year-old man arriving in Hong Kong from India on October 15. The man had a negative result to a COVID-19 nucleic acid test done at a laboratory recognised by the local government prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong. Upon arrival in Hong Kong, he provided proof showing his identity as a consular staff in Hong Kong. Personnel of the CHP thus made relevant quarantine and testing arrangements for exempted persons according to the existing mechanism. The man then proceeded to the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at the Hong Kong International Airport to collect his deep throat saliva specimen and was allowed to leave after completion.

Upon leaving the airport, the man was immediately taken to his residence in a vehicle arranged by the consulate and was placed under medical surveillance for 14 days as required by the DH. Upon testing preliminarily positive on the same day, the CHP immediately transferred him to a public hospital for isolation and treatment. According to the patient, he had stayed at his residence alone upon arrival without leaving.

When following up on this case, the CHP was informed by another relevant government department that the man does not belong to a rank that can be exempted from compulsory quarantine requirements even though he is a consular staff in Hong Kong. Under the prevailing policy, this person who returned from a specified high risk place should have undergone compulsory quarantine at a hotel room.

The department expressed its apologies for the inappropriate quarantine arrangement and has reminded relevant staff to be prudent when handling quarantine exemption arrangements to avoid recurrence of similar incidents.