

DH strengthens health declaration measure at Hong Kong International Airport and urges the public to delay non-essential travel outside Hong Kong

The Department of Health (DH) today (March 6) announced that starting from 0.00am on March 8, the health declaration arrangements at the Hong Kong International Airport will be expanded from inbound flights from the Mainland to all flights arriving Hong Kong. All inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport will be required to complete and submit a health declaration form.

The DH has rolled out an electronic health declaration form for the convenience of travellers and to reduce the use of papers. Currently, all travellers on flights arriving Hong Kong from the Mainland can choose to fill in and submit the health declaration form on their smartphone or mobile device. The measure will be extended to all inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport from 0.00am on March 8. The DH will seek the assistance of airline companies to distribute the health declaration forms to inbound travellers and disseminate information on the submission of electronic health declaration forms.

Meanwhile, the DH's Centre for Health Protection (CHP) reminded members of the public that as the transmission of COVID-19 virus has been increasing around the world, they are advised to consider delaying all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

Since February this year, the accumulated number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in countries/areas outside Mainland China has kept on rising. The number of reported cases has increased substantially in some countries since March, indicating active community transmission. As at 6pm today, the number of confirmed cases on the Mainland was 80 552 while at least 16 600 cases have been reported in over 80 countries/areas.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has earlier issued a Red Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) on Korea and three regions (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto) in Italy, as well as alerted the public about health risk in Iran under the Red OTA already in force.

If it is unavoidable to travel to countries/areas outside Hong Kong, the public should avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms during travel and wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. Besides, the public should observe personal and environmental hygiene and take preventive measures, in particular, avoid touching animals (including game) poultry/birds or their droppings; avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms; and do not consume game

meat or patronise food premises where game meat is served.

In addition, the CHP will also further extend the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme to cover all private clinics and hospitals so that cases of COVID-19 can be identified early in order to minimise the risk of community transmission. The CHP today issued letters to doctors and private hospitals to inform them that the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) under the CHP will provide free testing on COVID-19 virus for relevant samples submitted by private doctors.

Starting next Monday (March 9), private doctors can collect respiratory samples from patients presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms, in particular for those with travel history outside Hong Kong within 14 days before onset of symptoms, and send the samples to PHLSB for testing on COVID-19 virus via accredited private laboratories. If samples are tested positive, the CHP will arrange the patients concerned for admission to public hospitals for isolation and treatment.