

Third Steering Committee meeting in accordance with the Serious Response Level under the Preparedness and Response Plan convened (with photos)

In light of two confirmed imported cases of novel coronavirus infection in Hong Kong, the Steering Committee formed under the Serious Response Level of the Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance (the Preparedness and Response Plan) convened for the third time today. The Committee discussed latest developments and announced new measures to ensure prompt response during the Lunar New Year.

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, said, "We are gravely concerned about the two confirmed imported cases of novel coronavirus infection. The Government will continue to remain highly vigilant and will adjust the response strategy and relevant measures in a timely manner. The aim of today's meeting is to see to it that departments would rise to the challenges and act according to the Preparedness and Response Plan under different scenarios. I have requested all departments to respond quickly to changes, attend to their duties steadfastly and do a good job in prevention and surveillance. Any relaxation is not affordable. Meanwhile, the Government will increase transparency and information dissemination."

Following the discussion of today's meeting, various departments have decided to implement the following enhanced measures:

- (1) Health declaration form system will be extended to Hong Kong West Kowloon Station starting [from tomorrow](#) (January 24). All inbound travellers by Express Rail Link (XRL) train will be required to complete and submit a health declaration form.
- (2) The MTR Corporation Limited has kindly agreed to enhance the cleansing of XRL train compartments operated by the Mainland after the arrival at Hong Kong West Kowloon Station.
- (3) The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has enhanced surveillance of suspected cases and revised the reporting criteria of Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent.
- (4) CHP has set up a hotline (2125 1122) for the suspected and confirmed cases. The hotline operates daily from 8am to 9pm including public holidays. Persons who are regarded as close contacts and other contacts of the cases concerned should call the hotline.
- (5) Among two quarantine camps, Lady MacLehose Holiday Village has been

officially activated today to receive persons who are required to be quarantined. As for Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village, preparation is now at the final stage.

(6) In view of the latest situation, the Education Bureau (EDB) has appealed to schools to consider postponing exchange activities with other Mainland cities that are organised by the EDB and other organisations.

(7) In respect of the supply of masks, the current stockpile of personal protection equipment in the DH and the Hospital Authority (HA) is adequate for three months' consumption. The Food and Health Bureau and DH are liaising with the suppliers at the wholesale level to ascertain scope for expediting the delivery of and stepping up local supplies.

(8) As for travel health advice, members of the public are urged to avoid visiting Wuhan. If it is unavoidable to travel to Wuhan, put on a surgical mask and continue to do so until 14 days after returning to Hong Kong; Generally speaking, members of the public visiting crowded areas should wear masks to protect oneself and other people. The relevant departments will enhance the publicity of the above messages.

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said: "At present, confirmed cases were detected in neighbouring regions and the number of cases increases rapidly. In order to reduce the risk of being infected, members of the public should always maintain personal and environmental hygiene, adopt prevention measures properly in order to cope with this public health challenge. In particular, I urge the public to avoid going to Wuhan, Hubei Province for the time being, if not necessary.

"The Centre for Health Protection will continue to conduct epidemiological investigations and conducted relevant contact tracing of the two cases confirmed today. The HA has transferred the patients to the Infectious Disease Centre in Princess Margaret Hospital for continuous isolation and management."

The HA had enhanced laboratory surveillance for pneumonia cases to have early identification of severe community-acquired pneumonia associated with novel coronavirus. At present, the occupancy of the some 500 isolation beds in public hospitals is around 50 to 60 per cent. Some 200 beds are immediately available for infectious patients. When necessary, the HA can use remaining several hundreds of isolation beds by phases. Depending on the latest development, the HA is prepared to activate designated clinics any time to meet the anticipated increased clinical demand. DH and HA will further discuss the specified arrangement of designated clinics.

The preparation of the two holiday camps of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to isolate the close contact of patients is ready.

Policy bureaux, government departments and organisations attending the Steering Committee meeting included the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Security Bureau, the Environment Bureau, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, the Education Bureau (EDB), the Commerce and Economic

Development Bureau, the Development Bureau, the Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office, the DH, the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), LCSD, the Information Services Department (ISD), the Home Affairs Department (HAD), the Tourism Commission, the Water Supplies Department, the Housing Department, the Transport Department (TD), the Highways Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Architectural Services Department, the Drainage Services Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Lands Department, the Hong Kong Observatory, the Government Property Agency, the Government Logistics Department, the University Grants Committee Secretariat and the Hospital Authority (HA).

Various departments have enhanced prevention and control measures according to the Preparedness and Response Plan and their own contingency plan, which include:

Stepping up surveillance and risk communication

- DH and HA will report the latest situation on a daily basis.
- DH has sent letters to all private hospitals, doctors and Chinese medicine practitioners in Hong Kong, reminding them to pay special attention and refer suspected cases that fall within the widened scope of surveillance.
- HA has reminded frontline healthcare staff including those working in the 18 Chinese Medicine Centres for Training and Research to pay special attention to clinical information of suspected pneumonia patients, including those who had visited Wuhan within 14 days prior to the onset of the illness. More stringent infection control measures are enforced in public hospitals in accordance with the Serious Response Level.

Strengthening port health measures and cleansing

- The MTR Corporation Limited, the Airport Authority, and the relevant airlines have enhanced cleaning and disinfection measures of the incoming express trains and planes from Wuhan as well as the cleaning of West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong XRL and Airport Terminal Building.
- Further strengthen port health measures. Additional thermal imaging systems were put in place in the Hong Kong International Airport and Hong Kong West Kowloon Station of the XRL for checking body temperature of travellers with increased frequency of random checking.
- Enhance dissemination of health messages through broadcast to travellers arriving by flight/XRL, distribution of leaflets, promulgating travel health news on website and using posters.
- FEHD will step up the cleaning of public facilities under the department's management including public markets, cooked food centres, hawker bazaars, public toilets and refuse collection points. FEHD also disseminates information to the trade associations of the food industry, and reminds operators of food premises to keep their premises and equipment clean as well as to maintain hygiene practices in handling food. Holders of hawker stalls are also urged to clean up their stalls thoroughly. To maintain hygiene of public places, FEHD will also strengthen enforcement by taking enforcement

action against people committing offences in relation to public cleanliness.

Publicity and public education

- CHP has set up a dedicated webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html) to provide relevant information and health advice.
- EDB has disseminated information to schools on preventing the spread of the infectious disease in the premises.
- SWD has disseminated information to child care centres, residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities, drug treatment and rehabilitation centres as well as service units subsidised by the SWD on preventing the spread of the infectious disease in the centres.
- The Housing Department has conducted regular cleaning of public areas of public rental housing blocks and its retail facilities, encouraged residents to maintain good hygiene practices and taken enforcement action against hygiene offences.
- The Labour Department has disseminated information to employers, employees and associations on preventing the spread of the infectious disease in the workplace.
- TD has disseminated information to the transport sector on preventing the spread of the infectious disease on public transport.
- HAD has disseminated information to hotels, guesthouses, property management companies, owners' corporations and mutual aid committees through District Offices and the relevant network on the infectious disease prevention measures.
- FEHD has carried out regular inspection to ensure that operators of licensed food premises keep their premises and equipment clean, and maintain hygiene practices in handling food. FEHD will also take enforcement action against people who cause environmental hygiene problems in public places by littering, spitting and other unhygienic practices. The Centre for Food Safety has also stepped up publicity through various channels to remind the public not to bring raw game, meat, poultry or eggs (except fully cooked eggs) without health certificates into Hong Kong.
- LCSD has disseminated information to its staff on preventing the spread of novel infectious disease in LCSD facilities as well as stepped up relevant cleansing operations and enforcement action against littering in LCSD venues.
- ISD and DH produced a new set of TV and radio Announcements in the Public Interest and two posters to remind members of the public of the travel and health advice on the prevention of the spread of novel infectious disease.

Designated webpage

A dedicated webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html) has been set up by the CHP to provide relevant information and health advice on Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent. Information on the affected countries/areas is available from the following webpage: www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statistics_of_the_cases_novel_coronavirus_infection_en.pdf

Health advice

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose

or eyes; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;

- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a liter of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

Travel health advice

- Avoid unnecessary travel to Wuhan of Hubei Province. If it is unavoidable to travel to Wuhan, put on a surgical mask and continue to do so until 14 days after returning to Hong Kong;
- Avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms in countries/areas with possible community transmission of novel coronavirus infection. If it is unavoidable to come into contact with them, put on a surgical mask and continue to do so until 14 days after returning to Hong Kong;
- Avoid visiting hospitals. If it is necessary to visit a hospital, put on a surgical mask and observe strict personal and hand hygiene;
- Avoid touching animals (including game), poultry/birds or their droppings;
- Avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms;
- Avoid making close contact with patients, especially those with symptoms of acute respiratory infections;
- Do not consume game meat and do not patronise food premises where game meat is served;
- Adhere to food safety and hygiene rules such as avoiding consuming raw or undercooked animal products, including milk, eggs and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or contaminated products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled;
- If feeling unwell when outside Hong Kong, especially if having a fever or cough, wear a surgical mask, inform the hotel staff or tour escort and seek medical advice at once; and
- After returning to Hong Kong, consult a doctor promptly if having a fever or other symptoms, take the initiative to inform the doctor of recent travel history and any exposure to animals, and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.

