



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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24 April 2020

Clerk to Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Ms. Maisie LAM)

Dear Ms LAM,

**Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Measures for the Prevention and Control of
Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Hong Kong**

The Panel on Health Services discussed measures for the prevention and control of coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) in Hong Kong at its meetings on 10 January, 30 January, 10 March, 20 March and 8 April 2020. Having consulted the Security Bureau, Education Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau (“LWB”), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and Hospital Authority (“HA”), I herewith provide the following supplementary information:

1. (a) estimation on the daily and total numbers of arrivals from Wuhan of Hubei Province since mid-December 2019. (at **Annex 1**)

(b) whether a Mainland resident holding valid visit endorsement issued by the relevant authorities other than that of Wuhan City but had stayed in the Hubei Province during its lockdown was allowed to enter Hong Kong as at 8 April 2020. (at **Annex 1**)
2. the quality of the surgical masks supplied by the Government Logistics Department (“GLD”) to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to distribute to candidates sitting for this year’s Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. (at **Annex 2**)

3. (a) the total number of surgical masks that was delivered to Hong Kong in early February 2020. (at Annex 3)

(b) in respect of the Administration's work in sourcing personal protective equipment (including surgical masks) globally to combat the novel coronavirus epidemic, (i) details of each order made so far and the expected delivery timetable for the ordered items; and (ii) its concrete plan on how to secure an adequate amount of these items for use by both frontline workers of the HA and residents of Hong Kong throughout the epidemic period. (at Annex 3)

(c) the date(s) on which the GLD and HA started to make direct procurement of surgical masks without going through a tendering process so that orders could be placed quickly in the highly competitive global market. (at Annex 3)
4. the progress of the work of the LWB in examining the proposal to prescribe COVID-19 as an occupational disease under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282). (at Annex 4)
5. the timetable for the disbursement of the monthly allowance of \$1,000 under the Anti-epidemic Fund for a period of no less than four months to frontline cleansing workers, toilet attendants and security workers employed by service contractors of the Government and Housing Authority. (at Annex 5)
6. the difference in the COVID-19 testing arrangements for asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving via the air control point and the land boundary control points (i.e. Shenzhen Bay Port and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port) under the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme as at 8 April 2020, and explain why there was a difference in the testing arrangements. (at Annex 6)
7. the surveillance work being carried out by the Administration to ensure that people who were subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine would not leave their dwelling places. (at Annex 7)

Yours sincerely,



(Lilian TSE)
for Secretary for Food and Health

Encl.

c.c.

Secretary for Food and Health's Office

Food and Health Bureau

Department of Health

Hospital Authority

Security Bureau

Education Bureau

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau

(Attn.: Mrs Winnie KANG)

(Attn.: Mr Kelvin CHENG)

(Attn.: Mr Ronald HO)

(Attn.: Mr Jonathan CHIU)

(Attn.: Miss Nicole LEE)

(Attn.: Dr KH WONG)

(Attn.: Dr KL CHUNG)

(Attn.: Mr Oliver LAM)

(Attn.: Mr Damian CHAN)

(Attn.: Mr Dominic CHOW)

(Attn.: Mr Herman SO)

(Attn.: Mr Patrick CHONG)

Annex 1

With effect from 27 January 2020, except for Hong Kong residents, all residents from Hubei Province and persons who have visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days are not permitted to enter Hong Kong. As at 21 April 2020, more than 2 400 such visitors, mostly residents from Hubei Province, had been refused entry at various control points by the Immigration Department.

Annex 2

The Education Bureau announced earlier that the candidates sitting for this year's Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination would be provided with masks distributed through the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. The relevant masks are supplied by the Government Logistics Department ("GLD"), including one batch from Mainland China with an expiry date of August 2023, and another batch from Russia with an expiry date of December 2024. Upon receipt of these masks, GLD had conducted random checks on them in accordance with established procedures and found them to be in order at the time of checking.

In general, as GLD procures a large quantity of masks from different suppliers and places of origin to meet the huge demand of government departments, the appearance and thickness of the masks may slightly vary. GLD has sought the professional advice of the Department of Health on the standards of masks and placed orders on this basis. Furthermore, it ensures that the masks have not expired before distributing them to departments.

Annex 3

Given the rapid development of the coronavirus disease-2019 (“COVID-19”) outbreak, global mask supply remains tight. The Government will continue to increase the overall mask supply in Hong Kong through a multi-pronged approach, which includes making greater efforts in global procurement, increasing the monthly production level of the Correctional Services Department, subsidising local production lines and developing reusable masks, etc. At the same time, the Government has vigorously reduced the non-emergency and non-essential demands for masks from bureaux and departments, such that most of the masks are used for anti-epidemic work as well as the essential and emergency services of other departments.

In light of the epidemic development, we expect that the global demand for personal protective equipment (“PPE”) will remain high and the Government will face stiff competition in its procurement work. As such, in order not to undermine the bargaining power of the Government Logistics Department (“GLD”) and other government departments in the procurement of PPE, we consider undesirable at this stage to disclose specific information on PPE procurement by individual departments (including the identity of suppliers, quantity procured and value, delivery timetable, etc.).

Since January this year, the Hospital Authority (“HA”) has expedited the procurement procedures for protective equipment, and increased the stockpiling target from three months to six months. With the Government’s coordination, some of the protective equipment ordered earlier by HA has gradually arrived. With the exception of N95 respirators, the current supply of various protective equipment is more stable than that at the initial stage of the epidemic. Based on the average consumption, the stock of various protective equipment is estimated to last for over two months. HA will continue to expedite procurement procedures to ensure that frontline healthcare staff will have sufficient protective equipment when providing services.

The Labour Department (“LD”) understands that there are views in the community that coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) should immediately be listed as a statutory occupational disease for different industries.

In considering whether a particular disease should be prescribed as a statutory occupational disease or whether the coverage of certain occupational diseases should be expanded, LD makes reference to the criteria of International Labour Organisation (“ILO”) for occupational diseases. According to the definition of ILO, occupational disease refers to a disease which has a causal relationship with specific exposure in the working environment or work activity, and the risk of the disease occurring among the exposed workers is significantly higher than that in the rest of the population, so that the occupational origin of the disease in an exposed worker can be reasonably presumed.

In prescribing a new occupational disease, LD has to clearly specify in the legislation what industries and processes in which the employees are engaged have definite risks posed by the disease, as well as the prescribed period within which the employees must have been employed to work in those industries or processes. Based on the ILO criteria, if employees engaged in specified industries or processes unfortunately contracted COVID-19, it can reasonably be presumed that their disease is caused by infection during work, and the employers have to pay compensation accordingly.

As the outbreak situation of COVID-19 is still evolving in Hong Kong and globally, LD is keeping a close watch on relevant medical and epidemiological data, especially the number of cases originated from work and their industry distribution, as well as the extent of community transmission and risks of infection. LD will take appropriate actions to pursue the matter once such information is available.

Although COVID-19 is currently not a compensable occupational disease prescribed under the Employees’ Compensation Ordinance (“ECO”), Section 36 of ECO stipulates that an employee contracting a disease not prescribed as an occupational disease may still claim compensation from the employer under ECO if it is an injury or death by accident arising out of and in the course of employment, and the employer is in general liable to pay compensation under ECO. If an employee contracts or suspects to have contracted COVID-19 by accident arising out of and in the course of his employment, he should inform his employer as soon as possible for notification to LD or approach LD direct for assistance.

Annex 5

One of the measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund is to provide a monthly allowance of \$1,000 for no less than four months to each frontline cleansing worker, toilet attendant and security worker employed by service contractors of the Government and the Housing Authority. The measure involves over 70 government departments, which are working closely with their respective contractors in order for the latter to transfer the allowance to eligible workers every month. Since March, departments have begun entering into agreements with relevant contractors, and most departments have now completed this step. Once both parties have entered into agreements, the department will release relevant funds to the contractors so that the first round of allowance can be transferred to the workers.

Under the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme (“the Programme”), the Centre for Health Protection (“CHP”) under the Department of Health (“DH”) has been providing free testing services for coronavirus disease-2019 (“COVID-19”) at Hong Kong International Airport (“HKIA”) to asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at Hong Kong from places with higher risks since 19 March 2020, with an aim to identifying the patients early and minimising the risk of community transmission. Starting from 29 March 2020, the scope of the Programme has been progressively extended to cover all asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at HKIA from places under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E). To speed up the collection of specimen from inbound travellers from overseas for conducting testing for COVID-19, DH has set up a Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (“TSCC”) at AsiaWorld-Expo (“AWE”) on 26 March 2020. Starting from 8 April 2020, DH has also strengthened quarantine and virus testing arrangements for inbound travellers, and all persons mentioned above are mandated under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) to have their deep throat saliva samples collected at the TSCC for conducting testing for COVID-19¹.

To further lower the risks of cases of COVID-19 imported from high risk regions from spreading in the community, starting from 9 April 2020, DH progressively and by phase required all asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving on flights from the United Kingdom, other European countries and the United States to have their deep throat saliva samples collected at DH’s TSCC and wait for the test results there. Starting from 19 April 2020, the above measure was extended to all inbound travellers arriving at Hong Kong in the morning, regardless of the place of departure. Starting from 22 April 2020, the above measure was extended to all inbound travellers arriving at Hong Kong. Depending on the arrival time of flights, DH will arrange those asymptomatic inbound travellers who need to wait for test results overnight to be temporarily accommodated in the DH Holding Centre for Test Result set up in a hotel. Besides, in view that in some recent cases persons undergoing home quarantine were tested positive for COVID-19 around the completion date of the quarantine, starting from 20 April 2020, DH will provide all asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at HKIA with an extra specimen collection container and request their

¹ All inbound travellers arriving at Hong Kong are required to immediately take a shuttle bus from the HKIA to DH’s TSCC at AWE for collecting and submitting their deep throat saliva specimens. If the result of the aforesaid test is positive, DH will immediately arrange the person concerned to be admitted to a hospital for isolation and treatment. The close contacts who travelled with the confirmed patient will be sent to designated quarantine centres to undergo compulsory quarantine for 14 days. If the test result is negative, the person concerned is still required to continue the 14-day quarantine at his/her place of accommodation.

collection of deep throat saliva samples by themselves during the home quarantine period for another round of virus testing.

For land-based boundary control points, starting from 8 April 2020, specimen collection containers will also be provided to inbound travellers who have been to Hubei Province in the past 14 days arriving via Shenzhen Bay Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port for collection of their deep throat saliva samples for virus testing during the period of undergoing compulsory home quarantine.

The DH has been closely monitoring the global situation and will timely adjust the quarantine measures for inbound travellers. In view that the number of confirmed cases in the Mainland has dropped significantly since early March and that the majority of recently confirmed cases are imported cases, and at the same time considering that the number and probability of confirmed cases are higher among travellers returning to Hong Kong from overseas, after risk assessment, the Government considers that it should focus resources and manpower to handle virus testing for travellers returning to Hong Kong from overseas. In fact, in the past two weeks (8 to 21 April 2020), about 83% of the 94 confirmed COVID-19 cases were imported cases (arriving at HKIA) or their close contacts.

Annex 7

According to the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), starting from 8 February 2020, except for exempted persons, all persons having stayed in the Mainland for any period during the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days, regardless of nationality and travel documents used. Since 25 March 2020, the compulsory 14-day quarantine arrangement has been extended to all persons arriving from or having stayed in Macao and Taiwan in the past 14 days prior to arrival in Hong Kong, in addition to those arriving from the Mainland. Furthermore, according to the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E), starting from 19 March 2020, except for exempted persons, all persons arriving at Hong Kong from places outside China will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days.

In accordance with the requirements under Section 8 of Cap. 599C and Cap. 599E, a person placed under quarantine in accordance with Section 3 must not leave the place of quarantine if the relevant person has not been given permission by an authorised officer. The Government has implemented various measures to monitor whether persons placed under quarantine abide by the law, including conducting surprise checks, placing calls to the relevant persons, sharing of real-time location via communication software and using electronic wristbands/ monitoring wristbands paired with mobile app, with a view to ensuring that the persons placed under quarantine are staying at their dwelling places.

As at 22 April 2020, officers from disciplinary forces had conducted surprise visits on over 13 000 persons under quarantine. The call centre of DH had placed over 180 000 telephone calls to persons under quarantine to conduct surprise checks. Relevant departments had also distributed over 65 000 electronic wristbands/ monitoring wristbands, shared real-time location via communication software with over 80 000 persons under compulsory quarantine, and made about 170 000 video calls to ensure that persons under quarantine are staying at their dwelling places. During the monitoring process, if abnormal situations are observed or persons who have breached the quarantine order are found, relevant departments will suitably follow up.