

# HONG KONG FILES

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**同心抗疫 Together,  
We Fight the Virus!**

## Hong Kong's Multi-pronged Response to COVID-19

Year 2020 was greeted by a new pandemic, COVID-19, in many parts of the world. In tackling the spread of the virus and protecting the health of the community, the Hong Kong SAR Government has implemented a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach with actions that are guided by three key principles: responding promptly, staying alert to the situation, and working in an open and transparent manner. In continuous consultation with medical experts and various sectors of society, the Government has been constantly adjusting the “Supress and Lift” strategy according to the actual situation, while considering the impact of the measures on the economy, livelihood and the daily lives of people.



*The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam (centre), accompanied by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan (left), holds a press conference on measures to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus on January 25.*

### Emergency Arrangements

- On January 6, a Steering Committee was formed under the Preparedness and Response Plan.
- On January 23, the first quarantine centre was activated, immediately after the first two confirmed cases of infection in Hong Kong were identified.
- On January 25, the Government activated the “Emergency Response Level” of the Preparedness and Response Plan.
- The Chief Executive Carrie Lam chairs the Steering Committee-Command Centre to oversee concerted efforts to fight the disease. First meeting was held on January 26.
- The Chief Executive has set up an expert advisory panel, comprising four world-renowned experts, to advise the Government in a direct and timely manner.

## Reducing People Flow Between Hong Kong and the Mainland

- On January 24, flights and high speed rail services between Hong Kong and Wuhan were suspended.
- From January 27, Hubei residents and those who have visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days (except Hong Kong residents) are barred from entering Hong Kong.
- Since January 28, the Mainland authorities have suspended the application, approval and issuance of the group visit endorsements and the endorsements under the Individual Visit Scheme for Mainland residents visiting Hong Kong.
- From January 30, flights between Hong Kong and other Mainland cities have been reduced by about half in stages. All rail services of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Intercity Through Train were suspended.
- From February 4, the Government closed all but two land Boundary Control Points, i.e. Shenzhen Bay and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), with the Mainland to stem the flow of cross-boundary travel. All ferry services to and from the Mainland and Macao were suspended.
- On February 5, immigration services at Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and Ocean Terminal were suspended.
- From early April, the operating hours of the passenger clearance services at the Shenzhen Bay Port and that of the clearance for cross-boundary coaches and shuttle buses passengers at the HZMB Hong Kong Port have been shortened, while the operating hours for cargo clearance remain unchanged (i.e. 24 hours daily).



The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung (third row, second right), views the prevention and control measures against COVID-19 at Hong Kong International Airport.

## Preventing Imported Cases

- Government issued Red Outbound Travel Alert on all overseas countries/territories on March 17, urging members of the public to avoid any non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.
- From March 25, all non-Hong Kong residents arriving from overseas countries and regions by plane will be denied entry to Hong Kong until further notice.
- Non-Hong Kong residents arriving from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan who have visited any overseas countries and regions in the past 14 days will be denied entry to Hong Kong until further notice.
- All inbound travellers, including Hong Kong and non-Hong Kong residents, are subject to a 14-day compulsory quarantine.
- All arrivals at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) are required to immediately collect their deep throat saliva sample for taking a COVID-19 test at the nearby Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC).
- All asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at HKIA are required to wait for test results before leaving. Passengers arriving by flights in mornings will stay at TSCC to wait for test results, while those who need to wait for test results overnight will be temporarily accommodated in the Department of Health Holding Centre for Test Result at the Regal Oriental Hotel.



The Government brought back Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province by chartered flights in March. Photo shows returned residents are briefed by Department of Health staff on the compulsory quarantine arrangements.

## Enhanced Quarantine Arrangements and Testing for COVID-19

- People who are close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases, but are asymptomatic, will be placed under compulsory quarantine at dedicated quarantine centres.
- A locally developed smart bracelet connected to the user's smartphone will be used in some cases to ensure that people comply with quarantine requirements.
- Those placed under mandatory quarantine will be subject to regular and surprise checks to ensure they are at the intended place of quarantine. Contravening the quarantine requirement would be a criminal offence.
- Rapid testing is available in public hospital laboratories to shorten the waiting time for test results.
- From March 9, the Centre for Health Protection extended the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme, which provides a free testing service for COVID-19, 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.
- From March 29, the CHP further extended the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme to cover all asymptomatic inbound travellers.



New quarantine facilities were constructed in Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre in March.

## Promoting “Social Distancing” and Boosting Supply of Surgical Masks

- Class suspension of all schools since the Chinese New Year holidays in late January; deferment of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education examination from March to April to protect students' health
- Special work arrangements for civil servants with government departments providing essential, emergency and limited public services only; enterprises are urged to make flexible work arrangements for employees to help fight the disease.
- Events that attract large crowds have been cancelled or postponed.
- Measures were introduced to regulate catering business premises, e.g. reducing seating capacity of premises of catering businesses and specifying 1.5-metre distancing between tables.
- Temporary closure of business premises, including amusement game centres, beauty parlours and karaoke establishments
- Prohibition of group gatherings
- The Government increased the supply of surgical masks by sourcing globally, increasing local production, and liaising with relevant Mainland authorities to facilitate speedy clearance and delivery to Hong Kong.
- Priorities include meeting the needs of healthcare workers and other personnel providing services to the public, as well as stabilising the market supply.
- The Government introduced the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme to help address the shortage of masks as well as to build up stock. On April 24, all 20 subsidised production lines under the scheme were approved. When in full production, the production lines will collectively supply 34.25 million masks to the Government and a further 7.65 million to the local market every month.



Mrs Lam (left) helps package surgical masks at the Correctional Services Department's Lo Wu Correctional Institution.



Mrs Lam (second right) visits the Kowloon Speedpost Operations Centre in Yau Tong to thank postal staff for their hard work during the coronavirus epidemic.