COVID-19: HONG KONG’S MULTI-PRONGED RESPONSE

OVERVIEW
The HKSAR Government has implemented a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the community while maintaining Hong Kong’s position as an international city and aviation hub. The Government response is guided by three key principles: responding promptly, staying alert to the situation, and working in an open and transparent manner.

KEY FIGURES
INFECTION TRACKER
Latest figures available at Centre for Health Protection’s geospatial dashboard

VIRUS CONTAINMENT

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Free testing services for patients attending 64 general out-patient clinics</td>
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<td>and 17 Accident and Emergency Departments under the Hospital Authority (HA)</td>
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<td>and all private clinics and hospitals</td>
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<td>As at December 15, a total of over 923,000 tests were performed under the</td>
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<td>scheme</td>
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<td>A total of 19 community testing centres in operation to provide self-paid</td>
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<td>testing services at affordable price</td>
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<td>More than 1.78 million persons underwent free virus testing under the 14-day</td>
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<td>Universal Community Testing Programme launched on September 1, 2020</td>
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<td>Over 5,900 units in eight operating quarantine centres</td>
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<td>Quarantine facilities for residents of residential care homes in AsiaWorld-</td>
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<td>Expo (AWE), Pok Fu Lam and Sai Kung</td>
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<td>1,900-bed community treatment facility at AWE</td>
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<td>Temporary hospital near AWE under construction to provide negative pressure</td>
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<td>wards with over 800 beds</td>
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<td>Over 9.5 million reusable masks and about 28 million locally-produced</td>
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<td>disposable masks distributed free-of-charge to the public</td>
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### SUPPORTING BUSINESS, PROTECTING JOBS

- Over $300 billion (US$38.5 billion) in relief measures – about 11% of GDP
- 10,000 civil servant and 5,000 short-term intern positions will be recruited in 2020-21
- 30,000 time-limited jobs worth $6 billion in public and private sectors in the coming two years
- $81 billion Employment Support Scheme: $44 billion in wage subsidies approved under the first tranche, benefitting 1.95 million employees and over 150,000 employers; $37 billion approved under the second tranche as of October 21, 2020 for 1.56 million employees and over 135,000 employers
- $7,500 subsidy to 116,000 self-employed persons under the first tranche, and 10,000 persons under the second tranche as of October 21, 2020
- 16 types of support for specific sectors totalling $21 billion
- Additional support of nearly $600 million to further help the hard-hit tourism industry

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- $10,000 cash payout to each adult permanent resident
- 20% fare reduction by Mass Transit Railway (MTR) from July 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. The Government will provide financial assistance to the MTR on a 50:50 matching basis.
- Monthly public transport expense threshold of the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme relaxed from $400 to $200 between July 2020 to June 30, 2021
- 2-year deferral of student loan repayments
- 1-month rental payment for lower income tenants living in public rental units
- 3-month extension of payment deadline of salaries tax, tax under personal assessment and profits tax
The HKSAR Government has implemented a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the community. The “Supress and Lift” strategy is constantly adjusted according to the actual situation and views from experts and stakeholders.

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### 1. CONTAIN AND CONTROL

**EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS**


- **On January 6, 2020**, a **Steering Committee** was formed under the Preparedness and Response Plan.

- **On January 8, 2020**, COVID-19 was included in the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance.

- **On January 23, 2020**, the **first quarantine centre was activated**, immediately after the first two confirmed cases of infection in Hong Kong were identified.


The Chief Executive chairs the **Steering Committee-Command Centre** to oversee concerted efforts to fight the disease. First meeting held on January 26, 2020.
The Chief Executive set up an expert advisory panel, comprising four world-renowned experts, to advise the Government in a direct and timely manner.

The Government set up a $30 billion (US$3.9 billion) Anti-epidemic Fund to provide resources needed to fight the virus and ease the burden on people and businesses on February 21, 2020, and announced two other rounds of $137.5 billion (US$17.6 billion) measures on April 8 and $24 billion (US$3.07 billion) measures on September 16, and a further injection of $6.4 billion (US$81.5 million) into the Fund on December 17.

PROMOTING “SOCIAL DISTANCING”

All kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (including special schools and schools offering non-local curriculum) and tutorial schools have suspended face-to-face classes and school activities until January 10, 2021.

A special work arrangement implemented again for Government employees to work from home until January 6, 2020, except for those providing emergency and essential public services. The Government appealed to employers to allow their staff members to work from home as far as possible according to their operational needs.

Events that attract large crowds cancelled or postponed.

Until January 6, 2021, social distancing rules as follows:

- **Mandatory mask-wearing** in all public places, and when boarding or on board a public transport carrier, save for outdoor public places in country parks and special areas. Some exceptions apply, e.g. people engaging in strenuous physical activity outdoor

- **Group gatherings** reduced to 2 people in all public places

- **For catering premises**: No in-house dining from 6pm to 4.59am; the number of customers at any one time must not exceed 50% of the normal seating capacity; no more than 2 persons at one table; at least 1.5 metres or other partition arrangements between tables, etc

- **Bars or pubs, amusement game centres, bathhouses, fitness centres, places of amusement, places of public entertainment, party rooms, beauty parlours, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises, massage establishments, sports premises and swimming pools** must be closed

- Club-houses allowed to open, subject to certain infection control requirements and restrictions

- **Hotels and guesthouses** are required to impose restrictions on gathering activities and strengthen infection control measures, including limiting the number of persons in a room, suite, meeting room or function room, or number of participants for any religious or cultural ritual in relation to a wedding

- Hotels with guests under quarantine are required to segregate them from other guests and take steps to ensure that persons under quarantine cannot leave their guest rooms and cannot receive any visitors during the quarantine period
ENHANCED QUARANTINE ARRANGEMENTS AND ISOLATION AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

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 to ensure people comply with quarantine requirements.

Those placed under mandatory quarantine will be subject to regular and surprise checks (phone calls, visits) to ensure they are at the intended place of quarantine.

Over 5,900 units in eight operating quarantine centres, namely the Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village in Chai Wan, the JPC Permanent Activity Centre in Pat Heung, Yuen Long, the Penny’s Bay Quarantine Centre on Lantau Island, the Silka Tsuen Wan in Kwai Chung, the Silka Seaview in Yau Ma Tei, the Rambler Garden in Tsing Yi, the Dorsett Kwun Tong, and the Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre.

Temporary accommodation facility at Tso Kung Tam Outdoor Recreation Centre for Hong Kong residents under compulsory quarantine who are unable to arrange accommodation.

The Government has set up a quarantine facility for residents of residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities in AWE. In addition, two quarantine centres for residents of residential care homes at Hong Kong PHAB Association Jockey Club PHAB Camp in Pok Fu Lam and Cheung Muk Tau Holiday Centre for the Elderly in Sai Kung have also been activated.

A community treatment facility has been set up in AWE with about 1,900 beds to admit patients with clinically suitable condition between the ages of 18 to 60 when needed.

PROCURING COVID-19 VACCINES

Being part of the two-pronged approach for the procurement of vaccines, the Government has joined the COVID-19 vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX Facility) led by the World Health Organization to procure vaccine doses for 35% of the population as a form of safety net to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Having regard to scientific evidence and clinical data and in consultation with the relevant scientific committees and expert groups, the Government will pursue additional supplies through advance purchase agreements with individual vaccine developers. The goal is to procure sufficient doses to serve at least two times the population. The Government will procure about 22.5 million doses of vaccine from three vaccine developers, with the first batch of vaccines expected to be delivered to Hong Kong in January 2021 the earliest. Negotiation with other vaccine developers on procurement arrangements will continue.

The Government has made a regulation to provide the legal framework for bringing in vaccines that satisfy the criteria of safety, efficacy and quality for emergency use, and planned to set up an indemnity fund to provide support for members of the public who encounter a rare or unpredicted severe adverse event associated with the administration of the vaccine.

The Government aims to provide vaccines for the majority of the Hong Kong population in 2021 and proposes to provide voluntary vaccination free of charge. Depending on the quantity of vaccines procured, the suitable groups for application and information on adverse events, etc., high risk groups such as healthcare workers and the elderly should be accorded priority in receiving vaccination. Details of the vaccination programme will be announced in due course.
BOOSTING SUPPLY OF SURGICAL MASKS

The Government introduced the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme to help address the shortage of masks as well as to build up stock. As of November 30, 2020, all 20 subsidised production lines collectively delivered over 212 million masks to the Government, including about 28 million masks that were distributed to the public.

Locally developed reusable masks were distributed free to all Hong Kong citizens, except babies and infants.

2. EARLY TESTING AND DETECTION

From March 9, 2020, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) extended the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme, which provides free virus testing service, 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. A total of 64 General Out-patient Clinics and 17 Accident and Emergency Departments under the HA are covered by the Programme.

Public hospitals will conduct COVID-19 testing for inpatients with influenza-like illness symptoms.

Individuals who perceive themselves to have higher risk of exposure and experience mild discomfort can obtain specimen collection packs free of charge for testing at 47 HA general outpatient clinics, 121 post offices or vending machines at 20 MTR stations.

Since mid-July 2020, testing for high-risk groups has been provided through the Targeted Group Testing Scheme (TGTS). Testing is also arranged on a regular basis or by random sampling for certain targeted groups depending on risk assessment and anti-epidemic needs. As at December 15, a total of over 923,000 tests were performed under TGTS.

The Universal Community Testing Programme, launched between September 1 and 14, 2020, provided free testing service of COVID-19 to members of the public who could participate on a voluntary basis. A total of about 1,783,000 specimens were tested.

Nineteen community testing centres across the territory were set up to provide self-paid testing services at a price capped at $240 to the general community. The Government will conduct testing for the public at the testing centres for public health reasons when necessary.
Free “LeaveHomeSafe” COVID-19 exposure notification mobile app was launched to encourage the public to voluntarily keep a more precise record of their whereabouts, minimising the risk of further transmission of the virus. Catering businesses and scheduled premises under relevant regulation must display the “LeaveHomeSafe” venue QR code at the entrance or at a conspicuous position.

Certain categories of persons will be required to undergo compulsory COVID-19 testing under relevant regulation. Specified medical practitioners under the regulation can also require symptomatic patients to undergo testing.

According to the needs of infection control, the Government may restrict movement of persons subject to compulsory testing, or seal off premises with epidemic outbreaks until all persons on the premises have undergone testing and the test results are ascertained by making a “restriction-testing declaration”. The declaration will cover a period of at most seven days.

### 3. PREVENTING IMPORTED CASES

From February 4, 2020, the Government closed all but two land boundary control points (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. Entry points at Shenzhen Bay, HZMB as well as Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) remain open with customs and health monitoring resources concentrated at these entry points.

Immigration services at Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and Ocean Terminal are suspended.

**All non-Hong Kong residents** arriving from overseas countries and regions by plane have been denied entry to Hong Kong since March 25, 2020. **Non-Hong Kong residents arriving from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan** who have visited any overseas countries and regions in the past 14 days are denied entry to Hong Kong.

All arrivals at HKIA are required to take a COVID-19 test. They are required to wait for test results before leaving.

Inbound travellers who have been to Beijing, Heilongjiang Province, Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Sichuan or Tianjin in the past 14 days arriving via land boundary control points are required to collect their deep throat saliva sample for COVID-19 testing.

**All inbound travellers**, including Hong Kong and non-Hong Kong residents, are subject to compulsory quarantine to a maximum of 28 days (apart from persons exempted under relevant regulations). Currently, arrivals who have stayed in places outside China in the past 21 days will be subject to a 21-day quarantine. Other travellers will be subject to a 14-day quarantine.

For **persons arriving at Hong Kong from places outside China**, in addition to the test upon arrival, they have to undergo two other tests at day 12 of the quarantine period, and on the 19th or 20th day following their arrival.

An inbound traveller who, on the day on which the traveller boarded a civil aviation aircraft that arrives at, or is about to arrive at Hong Kong, or during the 21 days before that day, has stayed in any specified very high-risk place (i.e. Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States), must provide documents including proof of negative result of nucleic acid test for COVID-19 with sample taken within 72 hours before departure, confirmation proof of room reservation in a hotel, etc.

**Crew change arrangement** for all passenger vessels and goods vessels without cargo operation suspended. Testing and quarantine arrangements for sea crew members of goods vessels coming to Hong Kong for cargo operations have been tightened since July 29, 2020.
Based on the prevention and risk assessment, testing and isolation arrangements for air crew members and other persons exempted from compulsory quarantine arriving Hong Kong, including consular and diplomatic officers, have been further tightened.

Except persons in transit or exempted from compulsory quarantine, an inbound traveller who, on the day on which the traveller boarded a specified aircraft, or during the 21 days before that day, has stayed outside China, must provide confirmation of hotel room reservation for not less than 21 days starting on the day of the arrival, stay in a designated quarantine hotel and must not allow visitors during compulsory quarantine. Dedicated transportation will be arranged to send travellers to the designated quarantine hotels from the airport or the Holding Centre for Test Result.

All persons who have stayed in South Africa and the United Kingdom for more than 2 hours in the past 21 days (including Hong Kong residents) will not be allowed to board flights for Hong Kong until further notice.

Hong Kong residents returning from Guangdong Province or Macao, upon fulfilment of specified conditions, including not having been to places other than Hong Kong, Guangdong Province or Macao in the past 14 days, holding a negative nucleic acid test result, etc., could be exempted from compulsory quarantine.

4. TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

**Briefings** are held to regularly update the media and the public on latest situation and measures

Dedicated [website](#) with useful information and updates on latest developments

**Publicity campaigns** to disseminate personal hygiene messages through online and offline media are run in a number of ethnic minority languages apart from English and Chinese.

“Tamar Talk” Facebook page provides information and clarifies rumours
USEFUL LINKS

Website on the Fight Against the Coronavirus

CHP's geospatial dashboard on COVID-19

BrandHK COVID-19 Update Page

Booklet on HKSARG Economic Relief Measures

Hospital Authority Patient Designated Website – Walk with Us – Combat COVID-19

University of Hong Kong dashboard on COVID-19 (with real-time effective reproductive number)

WHO Coronavirus website