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**South China Morning Post**

Hong Kong / Health & Environment

China coronavirus: three new cases in Hong Kong, increasing total number to five

Centre for Health Protection says the three patients' respiratory specimens tested positive for the new coronavirus and all have been isolated in hospital

Chief Executive Carrie Lam says public's health is top priority

Topic | China coronavirus outbreak**Cannix Yau, Kanis Leung, Alvin Lum,
Chan Ho-him**

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Hong Kong had three new cases of patients – including a married couple – testing positive for the Wuhan coronavirus, increasing the total number to five as of Friday night.

The Centre for Health Protection said the three patients' respiratory specimens tested positive for the new coronavirus and all had been isolated in hospital. The three, all residents of Wuhan who arrived in Hong Kong by high-speed rail, were in a stable condition.

The centre also revealed that Japan's second confirmed patient had taken a plane to Hong Kong from Wuhan on a transfer flight to the Northeast Asian country.

The latest cases involved two 62-year-old women and a 63-year-old man who had been in Wuhan within 14 days of falling ill. One woman was being treated in Tuen Mun Hospital, and the married couple at Prince of Wales Hospital in Sha Tin.

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As the number of Hong Kong cases continued to rise, Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor arrived back in the city on Saturday morning after leading a delegation to promote Hong Kong in the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Lam said she will be meeting her ministers and aimed to hold a press conference over the government's campaign against the Wuhan coronavirus on Saturday afternoon.

"We put the public's health as top priority," Lam said.

"All works to prevent the disease are better stringent than relaxed."

Lam reiterated that she had kept in daily contact with health minister Sophia Chan Siu-chee while she was away. She did not take questions from the media.

China coronavirus: new cases in Singapore, Japan, Nepal and Korea

24 Jan 2020

[1]

The woman in Tuen Mun Hospital had arrived in Hong Kong on Sunday after transferring from Shenzhen North station and developed a fever and cough the following day. She had been to a wet market and a hospital in Wuhan to visit a relative who had coughing symptoms, but did not have any exposure to wild animals.

Both she and her husband came to Hong Kong to visit their daughter and son-in-law, and stayed in a flat at South Hillcrest in Tuen Mun. The husband, daughter and son-in-law were asymptomatic but would be quarantined.

Meanwhile, the couple in the Sha Tin hospital arrived at the West Kowloon terminus

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Their daughter developed a fever on Thursday and would be sent to the same hospital while the helper had no symptoms but would be quarantined.

A medical source said the couple had previously tried to escape from the hospital when they found out they needed to be put in isolation, but authorities found them and put them in quarantine.

The Centre for Health Protection also said the patient in Japan was from Wuhan and had taken flight KA853 to Hong Kong on Sunday. The patient then travelled on to Tokyo's Narita airport on CX500. Cathay Pacific Group said disinfection would be conducted on both aircraft.

The first coronavirus patient in Hong Kong was a 39-year-old mainland tourist, who arrived at West Kowloon on Tuesday. The second, a 56-year-old Hongkonger, had visited Wuhan.

The latest developments came as authorities reported 70 more suspected cases of infection over the 24 hours to noon Friday as a result of broader criteria for people showing symptoms. The youngest case is a seven-month-old baby and the oldest patient aged 91.

The total number of suspected cases reached 236 as of 8am on Friday. By evening, authorities said there were 96 patients hospitalised and in isolation, with 91 in stable condition. Three were in critical condition and two in serious condition because of underlying illnesses.

Earlier in the day, Dr Chung Kin-lai, the Hospital Authority's director of quality and safety, said the increase was due to officials widening their reporting criteria for a suspected case.

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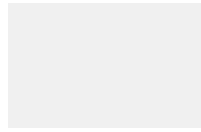
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Centre controller Dr Wong Ka-hing and respiratory medicine expert Professor David Hui Shu-cheong said the city had stepped up measures at border checkpoints, but neither could say whether Hong Kong should close its borders with the mainland or ban suspected cases from entering.

Hui said it was a decision to be taken at diplomatic levels. He added the city had not yet seen infections in the community as occurred during the Sars outbreak in 2003.

But Hui urged the organisers of mass events to think more about the risks involved.

“For example, the marathon, many people from different places will gather and participate, including some who might be coming from infected areas,” he said.

He suggested the public wear masks on public transport or in crowded areas such as shopping malls.

The death toll on the mainland is now more than 40, and there are more than 1000 among at least 910 confirmed cases. The virus has spread to other areas of the world, including Thailand, Japan, and South Korea, while Macau reported its second case on Thursday, a 66-year-old tourist from Wuhan.

The first two confirmed cases in Hong Kong were treated as “highly suspected” after preliminary diagnostic tests returned positive results on Wednesday. Subsequent DNA test results confirmed their diagnosis on Thursday.

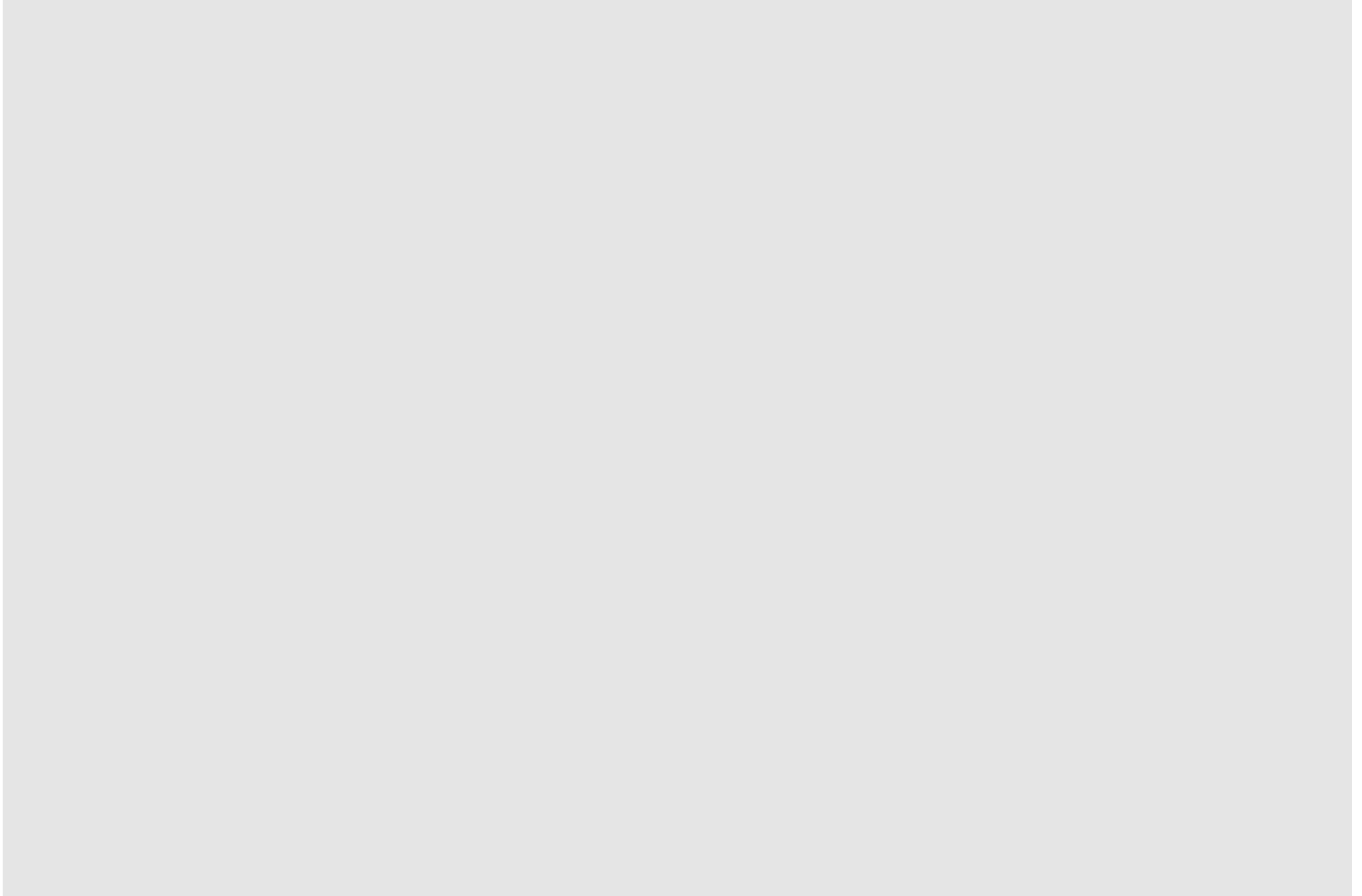
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Dr Chuang Shuk-kwan, the CHP's head of the communicable diseases branch, said three people who had been in close contact with the two had been placed in hospital quarantine. Another five people had been placed in quarantine at one of the two holiday camps set up for the purpose – Lady MacLehose Holiday Village and Lei Yue Mun Park.



Travellers at the departure hall of the West Kowloon rail station. The first coronavirus patient in Hong Kong was detected upon arrival at the station. Photo: Handout

“So far, we’ve been able to trace 18 people who had close contact with the two patients. We will keep tracking them,” she said.

The authority’s Chung said the sharp rise in suspected cases posed a huge burden, with half of the 570 isolation beds taken and more than 70 per cent of 309 isolation

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He said the authority might have to reduce non-emergency medical procedures and services during the Lunar New Year to cope with the rising demand for medical resources and manpower.

“During this period, doctors may reduce their outpatient services. We will operate our drugs refill clinics to ensure patients get their prescribed medicines. I beg for public understanding,” he said.

Chung said staff accommodation had been arranged for some medical workers who had shown flu symptoms. “So far, no medical worker has tested positive,” he said.

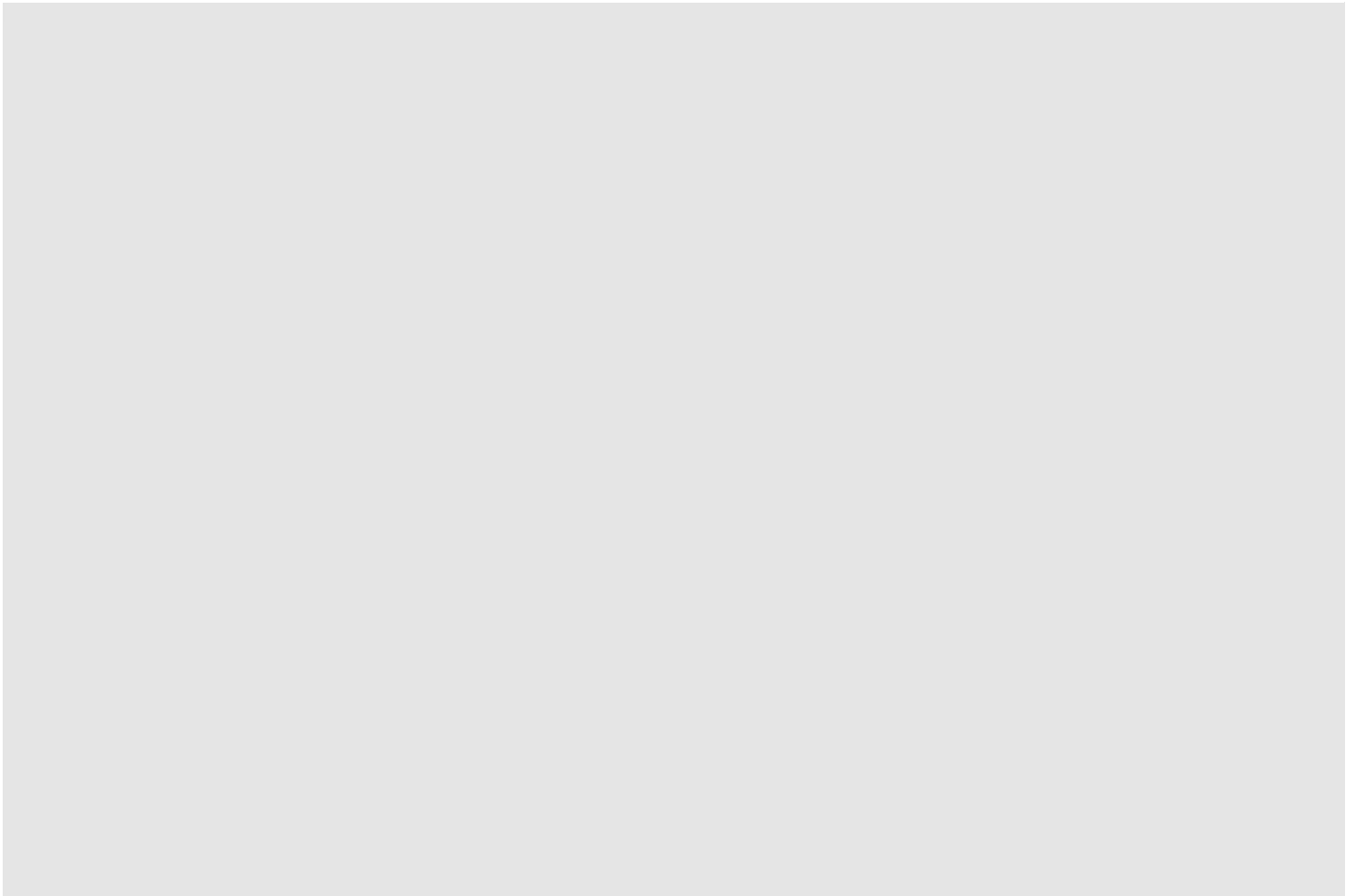
He also said the authority was trying to rent hotel rooms to temporarily accommodate staff, but most hotels had turned down its requests.

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Medical workers at Lei Yue Mun Park holiday camp which has been set up for suspected coronavirus patients. Photo: Dickson Lee

There were also rumours online that Chui Tak-yi, the undersecretary for food and health who recently visited Wuhan to study the situation, was suspected to have caught the infection. But the government strongly refuted the claim, saying all members of the delegation to Wuhan were in good health.

In Macau, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau announced on Friday that following the Lunar New Year holiday, classes in non-higher education schools would resume on February 10 or later, rather than February 3.

Schools have been asked to make necessary arrangements so students can study at home, while private teaching support centres and continuing education institutions

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Meanwhile, Hong Kong authorities have cancelled some activities associated with the annual Well-Wishing Festival in Tai Po, although residents are still welcome to visit the wishing tree.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club also announced it would limit the crowd to 8,000 for the Lunar New Year races at Sha Tin on Monday.

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