

Territory-wide flag day today

Stewards has been issued a Public Subscription Permit to hold a territory-wide flag sale from 7am to 12.30pm today (January 29), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities, including any updated information, covered by the issued Public Subscription Permit have been published on the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search). Permits for flag days containing information on contact methods of the flag-selling organisations and the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_controlofc/sub_flagdays) for reference. For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678.

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice

The Government exercises the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publishes in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at 40 specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

In view of 16 local/local-related cases, 15 import-related cases and one case tested preliminarily positive, 40 specified premises are included in the compulsory testing notice. The Government strongly reminds members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests on time as required. The above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. They are advised to closely monitor their health conditions. They should seek medical attention and undergo testing even if they have only mild symptoms.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are available on the Centre for Health Protection (CHP)'s website via the following link: (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ctn_20220128.pdf).

Except for tests that, as specified, may be carried out using deep

throat saliva sample, persons subject to compulsory testing in accordance with a compulsory testing notice must go to any of the mobile specimen collection stations, community testing centres (CTCs) or recognised local medical testing institutions to undergo professional swab sampling in fulfilling the requirements for compulsory testing. Young children may continue to undergo the test using a stool specimen.

If Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above, the Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or the post-super typhoon "extreme conditions" announcement by the Government is in force at any time during the period for undergoing the compulsory testing, the period for undergoing the compulsory testing will be further extended for one day.

The Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from COVID-19. They can provide protection to those vaccinated to prevent serious complications and even death after infection. The Government appeals to persons who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, to get vaccinated as soon as possible for better self-protection.

Subsequent to the announcement by the CHP on the updated quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with a mutant strain, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the Department of Health (DH). They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf). In addition, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person placed under quarantine pursuant to section 22 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (person under quarantine) in the same residential unit on the date of commencement of quarantine or during the 14 days before that day, and who becomes aware of the quarantine of the person under quarantine when the relevant quarantine has not yet been completed, has to undergo testing within two days of him or her becoming aware that the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (6275 6901), fax (2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test. For prudence's sake, the above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well.

CTCs provide testing services for the public, including free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. Booking and walk-in services are available. Members of the public only need to provide simple personal information on the 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en). The system shows the booking status of the centres for the coming two weeks to facilitate the public's planning and selection of a suitable testing centre and a time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. As of 6pm on January 28, there were

around 14 000 booking places available for today and tomorrow (January 29 and 30) at the CTCs, and around 57 per cent and 76 per cent availability for booking places for the coming seven days and 14 days respectively. Members of the public may call the testing centres for enquiries on the availability of bookings or walk-in quotas before visiting the centres.

The Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations at Kwai Chung Sports Ground and Siu Sai Wan Community Hall, and re-open six mobile specimen collection stations at Kwai Chung Estate and the mobile specimen collection station at the open area outside Wang Sin House of Cheung Wang Estate in Tsing Yi today to provide free services for persons subject to compulsory testing. The mobile specimen collection station at the basketball court outside Mun Hong House of Mun Tung Estate in Tung Chung will continue to operate today, and the service period of mobile specimen collection stations at Tai Wo Hau Estate Community Centre and Siu Lun Sports Ground in Tuen Mun will be extended to January 30. In view of the overall testing demand across Hong Kong, the mobile specimen collection stations at the bandstand of Victoria Park and Kam Yung House of Kam Fung Court will cease operation starting today in order to tackle the latest epidemic development.

Free testing service will be provided to persons subject to compulsory testing at CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations located at 56 places in various districts today. The testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the demand. Persons subject to compulsory testing and those who received the "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the CHP reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may conduct free testing at CTCs or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable). The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations are stated in the Annex.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

(a) For tests which require using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable)

at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;

2. To attend any of the CTCs (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en);

3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list

at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf), and the relevant sample must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs; or

4. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the stool sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

(b) For tests which may be carried out using deep throat saliva sample, or for persons holding a medical certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner proving that they are unfit to undergo testing using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs because of health reasons

1. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the

120 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);

2. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority; or

3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau cautioned that testing received at the Accident and Emergency Departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notice.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the CTCs."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notifications containing the result of the test and the relevant medical certificate (if applicable) for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the CTCs, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the CTCs are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks

(such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or had contact with cases tested positive), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."

HAD distributes complimentary COVID-19 rapid test kits to Yuen Long residents (with photo)

In the light of the positive test results for the COVID-19 virus from some sewage samples collected in Yuen Long Site 4A (the Site) (See Annex), the Home Affairs Department and the Yuen Long District Office (YLD0) distributed today (January 28) and will continue to do so tomorrow (January 29) a total of some 28 000 COVID-19 rapid test kits to residents within the Site.

Starting from today, YLD0 has been distributing the rapid test kits to households living within the Site through owners' corporations, residents' organisations and property management companies. YLD0 has also been giving out the test kits to households of "three-nil" buildings and in the rural area within the Site with the respective help of local organisations and the relevant Rural Committees. YLD0 already distributed around 17 000 rapid test kits to residents within the Site today, in the hope of identifying infected persons early, so as to better protect the infected persons and their families. However, the Government stresses that rapid test kit testing is not a substitute for the Government's compulsory testing requirement.

The Government appeals for the co-operation of members of the public to safeguard the health of themselves and their families by undergoing testing on a voluntary basis and fighting the virus together. The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or had contact with cases that tested positive), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons to reduce the transmission risks of COVID-19.



The Government appeals for the public in Discovery Bay to undergo testing

The Government said today (January 28) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong had strengthened the sampling of sewage for virus testing in all districts, and had recently detected positive results in Discovery Bay, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the district. Therefore, the Home Affairs Department (including Islands District Office) will distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits to residents in Discovery Bay from tomorrow for them to take the test on their own, so as to help identify the hidden cases and stop the spread of the virus in the district.

Residents may call the hotline at 3700 8888 for enquiries relating to the use of the rapid test kits. Should positive test results is shown on the test kit, user should seek medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Departments promptly, so that appropriate diagnosis and treatment can be given at the earliest possible time. Residents should stay home as far as possible and avoid going out apart from seeking medical consultation in order to prevent the virus from spreading in the community. The spokesman stressed that rapid test kit testing is not a substitute for the compulsory testing requirement. Individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, have visited places with epidemic outbreaks or have been in contact with infected persons tested positive, etc, should undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test promptly.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (January 28), 23 patients who had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus (case numbers: 12640, 12641, 12668, 12670, 12677, 12686, 12839, 12877, 12902, 12925, 12927, 12946, 12950, 12953, 12959, 12964, 12990, 12994, 13002, 13006, 13007, 13021 and 13380) were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 12 710 patients have been discharged.

A total of 808 patients who had tested positive are currently hospitalised in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, the Hospital Authority (HA) Infectious Disease Centre, the Community Treatment Facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and 12 public hospitals. All of them are in stable condition.

The HA will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.