

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 57 specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

In view of one local case tested preliminarily positive involving mutant strains, one import-related case and two possibly import-related cases, 56 specified premises visited by the cases 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 above compulsory testing notice are in Annex 1.

In addition, any person who had been present on the cruise ship "Spectrum of the Seas" at any time during the period from 1.30pm on January 2 to January 4 for more than two hours (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and passengers), has to undergo testing on January 5 and 7. Unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, persons subject to the compulsory testing must stay on the cruise ship "Spectrum of the Seas" or in a place specified by a health officer and may not leave before having undergone the specified test on January 5 and upon agreement of a health officer; and should stay at his or her place of residence and avoid going out as far as possible before the result in respect of specified test on January 7 is ascertained.

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 before the fifth wave strikes in Hong Kong.

Subsequent to the announcement by the Centre for Health Protection (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). For prudence's sake, the above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well.

In accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, 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 4, there were around 32 000 booking places available for today (January 5) at the CTCs, and around 91 per cent availability for booking places for the coming seven days. 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 or re-open mobile specimen collection stations at the following locations today for persons subject to compulsory testing, details of the service scope are in Annex 2:

- Lockhart Road Playground in Wan Chai

- Block 6 of Villa Athena in Ma On Shan
- Open area next to Discovery Bay Fire Station

The service period of the temporary extension of the Airport CTC at South Transition Deck, L6, Terminal 1 of Hong Kong International Airport will be extended to January 23 (Sunday). Outdoor mobile specimen collection stations will be closed if Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or the Red Rainstorm Warning Signal is in force while all mobile specimen collection stations together with all CTCs will be closed when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or higher or the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is in force.

Free testing service will be provided to persons subject to compulsory testing at CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations located at 39 places in various districts today. The testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the demand. Persons subject to compulsory testing and those 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 Annex 2.

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

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.

If a person subject to compulsory testing obtains a medical certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner, proving that he or she is unfit to undergo testing using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs because of health reasons, then he or she may choose to undergo testing via the following routes by providing a deep throat saliva sample:

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.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to the

DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purposes as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

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 contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."

CHP follows up on SARS-CoV-2 virus case 12754 and two related cases tested preliminarily positive

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 5) said that it is following up on the epidemiological investigation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus case 12754 and is investigating two related cases tested preliminarily positive.

The first case involves 48-year-old female patient living at Causeway Tower, 16-22 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay, who is a close contact of an earlier case epidemiologically linked with imported case 12754 (family member of imported case 12676 living together). She has no travel history during incubation period. She developed headache, cough and sore throat on January 2 and was sent to hospital on January 4. Her test conducted on the same day tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value of about 20. She danced with case 12754 together with some 20 friends on December 31, 2021 at Victoria Park and Causeway Bay Community Centre. She is a housewife and received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Sinopharm) on August 20 and September 10 in the Mainland.

The second case involves a 43-year-old female patient living at Chesterfield Mansion, 11 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay, who is a foreign domestic helper (FDH). Her employer is another close contact of case 12754. She has no recent travel history. The patient developed symptoms including fever, cough, runny nose and sore throat on January 2 and was arranged by her employer to a boarding house for FDH at Rialto Mansion, 177-191A King's Road, North Point on January 4. She was sent to hospital on the same day and tested preliminarily positive, with a Ct value of less than 20. She received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty). According to the information so far, case 12754 visited the residence of the 43-year-old female patient and her employer at Chesterfield Mansion on December 30, 2021. The employer also danced with case 12754 and some 20 persons aforementioned on December 31 at Victoria Park and Causeway Bay Community Centre.

As the aforementioned cases may carry the Omicron mutant strain with higher transmissibility and risk of infection, the Government has made "restriction-testing declaration" last night for the buildings where the two patients resided (Causeway Tower, 16-22 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay and Chesterfield Mansion, 11 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay) and persons who resided or worked at the buildings will be subject to increased compulsory testing frequency. The places where they had visited during the incubation periods will also be included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

Further investigation of the CHP revealed that employer of the 43-year-old female patient and another eight close contacts of case 12754 boarded the cruise ship "Spectrum of the Seas" on January 2, which embarked on a "cruise-to-nowhere" on January 2 and scheduled to return on January 6. According to information provided by the cruise company, there are about 2 500 passengers and some 1 200 staff members. Once obtained the information that some close contacts boarded the cruise ship, the CHP immediately requested the cruise company to isolate the nine close contacts on the cruise ship first and arrange testing for them onboard. The nine persons tested preliminarily negative. The CHP has also requested the cruise ship to return earlier, i.e. morning on January 5. For prudence's sake, the cruise ship will be included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who had been on board the cruise ship at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified dates. The Government will arrange testing for all passengers and staff members when the cruise ship arrived Kai Tak Cruise Terminal. The nine close contacts will be sent to Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre for quarantine. Officers of the CHP will board the cruise ship to inspect the sanitary condition.

The spokesman for the CHP said, "The Government has remained vigilant and has been closely monitoring the latest scientific data on mutant strains as well as the epidemic situation of various places. The most stringent anti-epidemic measures will be implemented to prevent the mutant strains from spreading in the local community."

At the moment, the adverse impact on the epidemic situation caused by the newly emerged mutant strains is not fully known yet, but vaccination is still essential to prevent severe cases and deaths from COVID-19 infection. The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk). The CHP also urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with exposure to infection risk, to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.

Government maintains existing social distancing measures and announces plan for expanding "vaccine bubble"

The Government announced today (January 4) the gazettal of extension of existing social distancing measures for 14 days from January 6 till January 19, and the plan for expanding "vaccine bubble" which will be put into effect from February 24 to allow sufficient time for preparatory work, including enabling residents to get vaccinated in an orderly manner.

Since the announcement of the new direction in fighting the epidemic by the Chief Executive on April 12, 2021, the Government has been adjusting relevant social distancing measures regarding the catering business and scheduled premises regulated under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) on the basis of a "vaccine bubble". In particular, staff members of certain premises (namely bars or pubs, bathhouses, party rooms, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises and cruise ships) are required to complete full vaccination, or undergo regular tests if he or she has been assessed by a medical practitioner to be medically unfit for vaccination. Also, at least two-thirds of customers visiting catering business premises under Type D Mode of Operation and all users of the scheduled premises operated under the "vaccine bubble" (namely the aforementioned premises save for mahjong-tin kau premises) must have received vaccination.

The Government will implement a series of measures to expand the requirements of "vaccine bubble". The scope of which will cover all catering business and scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F (namely bars or pubs, bathhouses, party rooms, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises and cruise ships, as well as all catering premises that provide dine-in service, amusement game centres, fitness centres, places of amusement, places of public entertainment, beauty parlours and massage establishments, club-houses, sports premises, swimming pools, hotels and guesthouses, and event premises). Furthermore, "vaccine bubble" will cover schools and certain government cultural and leisure facilities such as public libraries.

According to the existing plan, staff members will be required to have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine when "vaccine bubble" is expanded to cover all catering business and scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F as well as other cultural and leisure facilities on February 24, and then at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccine after eight weeks' time. As for premises where customers or users are required to receive vaccination for entry, the customers and users will need to have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Only under two circumstances can the vaccination requirement be exempted: individuals are (1) ineligible for vaccination due

to age; or (2) unfit for vaccination due to health reasons with relevant proof from a medical practitioner. Staff members who are assessed by a medical practitioner to be unfit for vaccination will need to undergo regular tests as specified.

Understanding the need for trade sectors to make preparations, the Government will have discussion with stakeholders before announcing the specific details of the vaccination requirements and the targeted individuals regarding schools and certain cultural and leisure facilities etc. The Government will also look into appropriate measures to facilitate persons responsible for the premises in complying with relevant requirements.

Vaccination is a crucial part of the local anti-epidemic strategy. The Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and death from COVID-19. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. Starting from January 1, the Government has further expanded the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Specific measures include extension of the opening hours of nine of the 10 Community Vaccination Centres to enable members of the public to receive a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine; provision of a third dose vaccination service to all eligible persons who have received two doses of the Comirnaty vaccine with the second dose received six months ago; provision of a second dose vaccination service to persons who have recovered from COVID-19 infection; and provision of a second dose Comirnaty vaccination service to persons aged 12 to 17.

"Many places around the world have recently registered record number of new cases due to the global emergence of Omicron mutant strain. We are racing with the virus that has become increasingly transmissible, and thus it is essential to expedite our COVID-19 vaccination uptake. We urge all residents who have not yet received the first or second dose, and those who are eligible to receive the third dose, to get vaccinated as soon as possible when vaccine supply is still adequate in Hong Kong. It is the right time to get yourself protected and join our efforts in building a protective barrier for Hong Kong from the epidemic," a government spokesman said.

As for existing social distancing measures, according to Cap. 599F, the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I), the details of the requirements and restrictions which will take effect from January 6 till January 19 (the specified period) are as follows (see Annex 1 for requirements and restrictions under Cap. 599F):

Catering business

(1) The existing requirements and restrictions applicable to the catering business, including the requirement of using the LeaveHomeSafe (LHS) mobile application, will be maintained during the specified period. Except for bars or pubs which are subject to other requirements, all catering business premises must operate according to one of the operating modes among Types B,

C and D Modes of Operation, with details in Annex 2.

Bars and pubs

(2) The existing requirements and restrictions applicable to bars or pubs will be maintained during the specified period. Details are in Annex 2.

Scheduled premises

(3) During the specified period, the existing requirements and restrictions applicable to the following scheduled premises under Cap. 599F will be maintained. They can operate according to the specified Mode of Operation if specified measures are adopted (details in Annex 1 and Annex 2). Otherwise, they should continue to be closed:

- (a) bathhouses;
- (b) premises (commonly known as party rooms) that are maintained or intended to be maintained for hire for holding social gatherings;
- (c) establishments (commonly known as clubs or nightclubs) that are open late into the night, usually for drinking and dancing or other entertainment;
- (d) karaoke establishments;
- (e) mahjong-tin kau premises; and
- (f) cruise ships.

(4) The existing requirements and restrictions applicable to other scheduled premises under Cap. 599F, including the requirement of using the LHS mobile application, will be maintained during the specified period. These scheduled premises can be opened when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled, including the persons responsible for carrying on the premises arranging for all staff members involved in the operation of the premises to undergo a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19 once every 14 days. The samples of which must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs and by professionals. Staff may complete a COVID-19 vaccination course as an alternative.

(5) Persons responsible for carrying on catering businesses and managers of scheduled premises that contravene the statutory requirements under Cap. 599F would have committed a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. In addition, persons who are present at any premises of a catering business or any scheduled premises have to comply with directions applicable to them. Non-compliance with the relevant directions would be an offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$10,000. The liability may be discharged by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000. In particular, a staff member or a customer who makes false declarations or provides false information under the relevant measures would be regarded as non-compliant with the directions issued under Cap. 599F and would be subject to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. Any contravention against group gathering requirements within a premises under Cap. 599F would continue to be handled according to the requirements under Cap. 599G, which means that participants of the group gathering would be subject to a fixed penalty of \$5,000.

Group gathering

(6) Unless exempted, the prohibition on group gatherings of more than four persons in public places will continue during the specified period. The requirement is also applicable to group gatherings in catering business premises and scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F in which the relevant requirements or restrictions are not complied with.

(7) According to Cap. 599G, any person who participates in a prohibited group gathering; organises a prohibited group gathering; or owns, controls or operates the place of such a gathering and knowingly allows the taking place of such a gathering commits an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who participate in a prohibited group gathering may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000. Any participant, staff member or customer who makes false declarations or provides false information under the relevant measures may be regarded as participating in a prohibited group gathering and subject to a fixed penalty of \$5,000.

Mask-wearing requirement

(8) The mandatory mask-wearing requirement under Cap. 599I will be extended during the specified period. A person must wear a mask at all times when the person is boarding or on board a public transport carrier, is entering or present in an MTR paid area, or is entering or present in a specified public place (i.e. all public places, save for outdoor public places in country parks and special areas as defined in section 2 of the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208)).

(9) Under Cap. 599I, if a person does not wear a mask in accordance with the requirement, an authorised person may deny that person from boarding a public transport carrier or entering the area concerned, as well as require that person to wear a mask and disembark from the carrier or leave the said area. A person in contravention of the relevant provision commits an offence and the maximum penalty is a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). In addition, authorised public officers may issue fixed penalty notices to persons who do not wear a mask in accordance with the requirement and such persons may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000.

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified

“restricted area” in Causeway Bay (2)

The Government today (January 4) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 11.05pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Causeway Bay (i.e. Chesterfield Mansion, 11 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay. See Annex) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 8am tomorrow (January 5).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a preliminary tested positive case who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the preliminary test result involved a mutant strain, the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, so the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area after the test result was found to be positive."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 2am tomorrow. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 8am tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person

must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from January 2, 2022 to January 4, 2022, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, according to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from December 15, 2021 to January 4, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before January 6, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the preliminary tested positive case carrying variant of concern suspected to be Omicron are required to undergo compulsory testing on days 2, 3, 4, 7, 12 and 19 counting from the day subsequent to that when the relevant confirmed case last stayed in that building before being admitted to hospital for treatment or leaving Hong Kong.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Causeway Bay

The Government today (January 4) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration"

(declaration) effective from 10.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Causeway Bay (i.e. Causeway Tower, 16-22 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay. See Annex) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 8am tomorrow (January 5).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a preliminary tested positive case who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the preliminary test result involved a mutant strain, the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, so the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area after the test result was found to be positive."

The Government will arrange dedicated staff to collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 3am tomorrow. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 8am tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from January 2, 2022 to January 4, 2022, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, according to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from December 15, 2021 to January 4, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted

area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before January 6, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the preliminary tested positive case carrying variant of concern suspected to be Omicron are required to undergo compulsory testing on days 2, 3, 4, 7, 12 and 19 counting from the day subsequent to that when the relevant confirmed case last stayed in that building before being admitted to hospital for treatment or leaving Hong Kong.

The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 10.30pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.