

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session (with video)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, and the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, met the media at the Central Government Offices today (August 25). Following is the transcript of remarks by Professor Chan at the media session:

Secretary for Food and Health: While the number of daily new cases has been gradually declining, the epidemic situation has still not stabilised totally. We would therefore extend the existing social distancing measures under Cap. 599F, Cap. 599G and also Cap. 599I for two more days until August 27.

However, under the new normal, it is not possible for us to wait until there are no more local cases before relaxing the social distancing measures. Hence, unless there are drastic changes to the epidemic situation, we would issue new directions before Friday on the following areas to:

- (1) Extend the dine-in services allowed to 9pm;
- (2) Allow re-opening of the following scheduled premises: cinemas, beauty parlours, and some outdoor sports premises for activities involving little physical contact; and
- (3) Allow people not to wear masks in country parks while doing exercises.

Having regard to the benefits that exercising would bring to one's physical and mental well-being, we have also amended Cap. 599I to include engaging in strenuous exercise in an outdoor place as a reasonable excuse for not wearing a mask so as to encourage the public to exercise more.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the public not to let down their guard during the fight against COVID-19. One key area is to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. I would also like to encourage members of the public to participate in the Universal Community Testing Programme, which would help us identify silent carriers and also curb the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Reporter: Secretary, why is the Government planning to wait until Friday to relax some measures but not from tomorrow? Is two days going to make like a huge difference? And you said the relaxation would not happen if there are drastic changes to the epidemic situation. What do you actually mean by that? Are you talking about an increase of cases to a certain level? What level are you talking about? Second question, Why 9pm, not 10pm, not 11pm or not till next morning? Apart from keeping some of the existing requirements, for example, the two-person per table requirement, will the restaurants be required by law to take extra measures so that even though there is a relaxation people will still be safe? Some experts said that an extension of the dining in hours would actually compromise the Government's universal testing scheme, it is because right now the scheme doesn't have a stay-at-home order to go with it already and a relaxation would actually encourage

more people to go out. So how would you respond to that?

Secretary for Food and Health: Thank you for your questions. First of all, as I have already said and also Dr Constance Chan, our Director of Health, has already said the entire situation of the epidemic in Hong Kong is not entirely stable but of course we have also observed a downward trend of the number of confirmed cases. While there are still cases whereby we cannot find the source immediately, that means there are some asymptomatic cases and silent transmission chains in the community. I think it is important for us to observe a few more days so that we are confident that the situation is more or less more stabilised so that's why it is not today and it is Friday, of course we would continue to observe the situation until that time.

Secondly, the whole point of extending the dine-in hour is because we observe there are some real needs in the community, for example, people who are working night shifts may like to have dinner outside. There is also an outcry among the people because they are all quite fatigued. Therefore, given the situation under the new normal and also the recent situation of the epidemic, we felt that we can extend a few hours in the dine-in hours. Why 9pm and not 10pm and not 11pm? I think it is because we want to shorten the time of people having masks-off activities. Then, balancing the need for eating in and having a shorter time (of people with masks off), we think probably 9pm and not later is appropriate in this context. The two-person requirement to be maintained is for the same reason. We do not want to have too many people gathering together while they have their masks off. Another reason is also because we want to do the relaxation in a gradual manner, so that we do not relax everything at the same time. It is because people's mobility is also something that we want to control. And the extra measures that you have mentioned in the catering business or the eateries, we have been working closely with the trade and they take initiatives in working towards some of the measures suggested by our experts, for example, improving the air change and having different staff working on different procedures in the eateries such as delivering the food and taking care the utensils after eating. So I think some of these measures, we are confident if it can be put in place, it would reduce the risk of spreading (of virus).

Finally, the Universal Community Testing Programme will be starting very soon. I think it is an important public health measure so that we can, first of all, understand the entire infection or spreading situation in the community. We know that there are still cases that have unknown sources and there are asymptomatic cases in the community. If we can do this Universal Community Testing Programme in a short period of time while we have a big testing capacity, we can hopefully in one go try to understand more about the community spreading situation. We can find out or detect the asymptomatic cases and isolate them and contain them and treat them, so that we can improve the entire epidemic situation. I think it is also important that people would take the message of relaxation as not a total relaxation. I think this is very important and that's why the Director of Health has given certain appeals. While we want to resume some of the normal activities in people's daily lives and also some economic activities at the same time under this new normal, it is important that we understand the virus is probably

here. As the Government, we are doing our best to contain and to control it. But at the same time when people are trying to go out and trying to resume some of these activities, which seems inevitable for many people, they also have to take precautions themselves. So I think this message, I hope it can be given to the community.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order

A 40-year-old man was sentenced to two weeks' imprisonment, suspended for two years, by the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (August 25) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap 599E) (the Regulation).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at a residential address stated by himself on the quarantine order for 14 days. The man was later found to have given a false residential address for use as the place of quarantine to an authorised officer at Hong Kong International Airport. He was charged with contravening section 9 of the Regulation and was sentenced by the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today to two weeks' imprisonment, suspended for two years.

Pursuant to the Regulation, starting from March 19, save for exempted persons, all persons arriving from countries or territories outside China would be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Moreover, pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap 599C), starting from February 8, all persons who have stayed in the Mainland, Macao or Taiwan in the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong, regardless of their nationality or travel documents, will also be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching a compulsory quarantine order is a criminal offence that the Government will not tolerate, and solemnly reminded the public to comply with the Regulation. As of today, a total of 40 persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching compulsory quarantine orders and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to three months or a fine of \$15,000. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who has breached the relevant regulations.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (August 25), 56 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 4 108 patients with confirmed or probable infections have been discharged.

At present, there are 675 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 220 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 480 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 19 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 27 patients are in critical condition, 35 are in serious condition and the remaining 418 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority 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.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
Discharged	2691, 2746, 2748, 2940, 3134, 3260, 3425, 3461, 3678, 3724, 4022, 4045, 4093, 4103, 4110, 4127, 4185, 4188, 4192, 4241, 4264, 4283, 4284, 4285, 4289, 4303, 4308, 4330, 4334, 4335, 4344, 4361, 4390, 4405, 4406, 4417, 4423, 4457, 4474, 4478, 4479, 4488, 4498, 4523, 4525, 4527, 4541, 4548, 4564, 4597, 4628, 4639, 4649, 4652, 4657, 4669
Critical	1401, 1470, 1650, 1779, 1835, 1989, 2007, 2282, 2792, 2890, 2912, 2968, 3170, 3308, 3626, 3635, 3764, 3904, 3949, 3960, 4101, 4187, 4213, 4222, 4306, 4419, 4429
Serious	1956, 1968, 2078, 2079, 2334, 2362, 2404, 2576, 2702, 2962, 2966, 2988, 2989, 3274, 3366, 3377, 3408, 3434, 3496, 3497, 3539, 3617, 3621, 3744, 3761, 3968, 4072, 4096, 4148, 4272, 4336, 4395, 4526, 4583, 4642

EMSD arranges free COVID-19 testing for lift and escalator trade practitioners

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (August 25) announced that, starting from tomorrow (August 26), free COVID-19 testing will be arranged for lift and escalator trade practitioners.

A spokesman for the EMSD said, "To strengthen anti-epidemic work, the Government has rolled out free COVID-19 testing services for high-risk target groups. Taking into account the specific circumstances of lift and escalator trade practitioners, the Government will extend the free target group testing services to them. The EMSD will distribute self-sampling kits via the registered lift and escalator contractors (registered contractors) to their employees, i.e. registered lift and escalator engineers and workers, as well as general workers and apprentices. These practitioners should take deep throat saliva samples by themselves and return the samples to the testing agency via their employers for testing."

The spokesman said registered lift and escalator engineers or workers who are not employed by the registered contractors can take their valid registration cards to the EMSD Headquarters during designated periods from August 27 for registration and collection of self-sampling kits. Details of the arrangement and locations of the sample collection points are posted on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk).

The testing is voluntary and free of charge. Practitioners who participate in the scheme should register online at the following government website: www.tgptest.gov.hk (website service will commence tomorrow). The testing agency will not obtain the personal data of the participants. Cases with positive results will be relayed to the Centre for Health Protection for follow-up.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, the EMSD has been in close liaison with the lift and escalator trade and has proactively reminded registered contractors to take appropriate action in keeping up periodic maintenance and examination work for lifts and escalators to ensure that the facilities are repaired properly and kept in safe working order. The department has also reminded the registered contractors that they must provide suitable protective equipment to workers in respect of their work environment to safeguard the occupational safety and health of the practitioners.

For the health of the practitioners and to stop the spread of the virus, the EMSD strongly appeals to the practitioners to participate in the testing scheme, continue to comply with the Government's regulation to wear masks, and maintain personal and environmental hygiene continuously.

For details of the testing scheme, please call the hotline of the EMSD at 2808 3121 or the testing agency at 2114 2281, or visit the EMSD website (www.emsd.gov.hk).

Exchange Fund Bills tender results

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	: August 25, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q2035
Issue date	: August 26, 2020
Maturity date	: November 25, 2020
Amount applied	: HK\$127,925 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$46,249 MN
Average yield accepted	: 0.06 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 0.07 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 23 PCT
Average tender yield	: 0.08 PCT

Tender date	: August 25, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: H2064
Issue date	: August 26, 2020
Maturity date	: February 24, 2021
Amount applied	: HK\$49,367 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$13,000 MN
Average yield accepted	: 0.10 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 0.11 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 73 PCT
Average tender yield	: 0.15 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning August 31, 2020:

Tender date	: September 1, 2020
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Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2036
Issue date : September 2, 2020
Maturity date : December 2, 2020
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$51,306 MN

Tender date : September 1, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2065
Issue date : September 2, 2020
Maturity date : March 3, 2021
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$12,000 MN

Tender date : September 1, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Y2094
Issue date : September 2, 2020
Maturity date : September 1, 2021
Tenor : 364 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$5,000 MN