

Government strengthens testing for inbound travellers from Beijing

A Government spokesman said today (June 18) that in response to the latest COVID-19 situation in Beijing, testing has been strengthened for inbound travellers from Beijing.

In view of the latest development of the epidemic, Beijing authorities have announced the elevation of response level for public health emergency from Level 3 to Level 2 and the subsequent implementation of various prevention and control measures on social distancing and restriction of flow of people. Such measures include the resumption of closed community management and the forbidding of those with risk of infection to leave the city. In general, people are advised not to leave Beijing unless necessary. Those who need to leave Beijing must possess proof of negative testing result for COVID-19 nucleic acid test that is taken within the past seven days. As a prudent measure and arrangement under the joint efforts with the Mainland authorities in disease prevention and control, the Department of Health (DH) will enhance port health measures in disease prevention and control, and strengthen testing for relevant inbound travellers.

Under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), all persons (other than exempted persons under the Regulation) having stayed in the Mainland (including Beijing), Macao or Taiwan during the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at a designated place (home or other accommodation). To ensure sufficient supply of supplies and food in Hong Kong and maintain cross-boundary activities such as necessary business activities in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development, Section 4 of Cap. 599C empowers the Chief Secretary for Administration to exempt certain categories of people fulfilling certain criteria from the 14-day compulsory quarantine. The quarantine exemption arrangement is necessary. Exempted persons, such as crew members of aircrafts or people supplying goods or services for Hong Kong, have the need to frequently commute to and from Hong Kong and the Mainland. Their activities in the Mainland are under certain degree of restriction to limit interactions and they are subject to medical surveillance to safeguard their health condition. Most of the exempted persons are travelling between Hong Kong and Guangdong.

Under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), unless exempted, all asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) are mandated to wait for test results at a designated location after submitting their deep throat saliva samples for testing COVID-19 at the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at AsiaWorld-Expo. Should they be tested negative, they will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at a designated place (home or other accommodation). In response to the situation in Beijing, since yesterday (June 17), the DH has been distributing specimen bottles to persons exempted

from compulsory quarantine who had travelled to Beijing 14 days prior to arrival at the HKIA. They should collect their deep throat saliva sample at home in accordance with the instructions, and deliver it to one of the collection points in the same morning while subjecting to medical surveillance at the same time.

As for land control points, those who have been to Beijing in the past 14 days must possess proof of negative testing result for COVID-19 nucleic acid test that is taken within the past seven days. Those arrivals who are not exempted persons are subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 day at a designated place (home or other accommodation) while exempted persons are subject to medical surveillance upon arrival at Hong Kong. For the sake of prudence, those with travel history to Beijing 14 days prior to arrival at Hong Kong via land control points (applies to all inbound travellers including exempted persons) will also be given specimen bottles for conducting COVID-19 testing and are required to collect and submit their deep throat saliva sample according to instructions.

The DH will continue to closely monitor the latest situation of COVID-19 around the world and review the quarantine and testing arrangements for inbound travellers.

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

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, joined by representatives of the catering sector, met the media on the sector's measures to boost consumption this afternoon (June 18). Following is the transcript of his remarks:

Reporter: The gentleman just now said thousands of catering sector members will take part. Can you talk about who exactly these people are? Why did they join this scheme? And, secondly, with Mr (Tommy) Cheung beside you, are you concerned that this measure could be seen as helping Mr Cheung's LegCo (Legislative Council) election campaign? Thank you.

Financial Secretary: Mr Cheung is the representative of the catering sector at the Legislative Council at the moment. Over the years, when the Government engages with representatives of different sectors, we of course engage with the incumbent LegCo members. This is very natural.

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

CEDB responds to recommendation by US Department of Justice's committee to deny PLCN connecting to HK

In response to media enquiries about the recommendation made by a committee under the Department of Justice of the United States (the Committee) in denying the submarine cable connection by the Pacific Light Cable Network (PLCN) to Hong Kong, a spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) said the following today (June 18):

"A submarine optical fibre cable system directly connecting Hong Kong and the US would help further enhance telecommunications capacity of the two places and facilitate trade and business activities. It is of mutual benefit to both places. We disagreed with and are disappointed about the Committee's recommendation in denying the PLCN connecting to Hong Kong. The recommendation not only hinders the telecommunications development between Hong Kong and the US, it also harms the interests of US investors and entities, and disregards the win-win situation between Hong Kong and the US as brought by investments in communications infrastructure. The concerns raised by the Committee are also ungrounded.

"As a telecommunications hub in the region, Hong Kong has a world-class telecommunications infrastructure. We attach great importance to the security and integrity of our telecommunications networks, which is widely acclaimed internationally. Our robust legal system also offers strong protection to privacy rights. These unique advantages are fully protected under the 'one country, two systems' principle.

"Countries around the world have their legislations to protect their countries' national security. The proposed national security law in Hong Kong will not affect the legitimate rights and freedoms under the Basic Law. As a matter of fact, international investors attach great importance to social stability and security, and we believe the national security law can bring confidence and a stable business environment to them.

"Hong Kong has a vibrant external telecommunications market, with a total of 11 external submarine optical fibre cable systems, 20 overland optical fibre cables and 11 communications satellites connecting Hong Kong with places around the world. The existing and planned capacity of the external telecommunications facilities are expected to meet the medium to long-term external telecommunications demand in Hong Kong. The total equipped capacity has reached 89.6 terabits per second (Tbps), which accounts for only a small fraction (about 11 per cent) of the overall designed capacity."

First-ever conviction case of money service operator violating Trade Descriptions Ordinance

A sole proprietor of a money changer was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment today (June 18) at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts after conviction for wrongly accepting payment in the course of business, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). This is the first-ever conviction case of a money service operator for engaging in unfair trade practices when running its business since the TDO was amended in July 2013.

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging that a money changer in Mong Kok had engaged in wrongly accepting payment in providing remittance service.

After investigation, Customs found that the money changer had failed to remit the money received from 18 customers to their designated Mainland bank accounts. The total amount involved was about \$3.2 million.

Customs welcomed the sentence and said a clear warning has been issued and a considerable deterrent effect has been imposed on unscrupulous practitioners operating a money changer.

Customs also reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO. Any trader commits an offence if at the time of acceptance of payment, the trader intends not to supply the product, or there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the trader will be able to supply the product within a specified or reasonable period. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (June 18), one COVID-19 confirmed patient (case number: 665) was discharged from hospital in the past 24 hours. So far, a total of 1,072 patients with confirmed or probable infections have been discharged.

At present, there are 611 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1,177 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 49 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in seven hospitals, among which three patients are in critical condition (case numbers: 595, 1092 and 1100), and the remaining 46 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.