

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tuen Mun and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice (2)

The Government yesterday (January 13) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 7.30pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tuen Mun (i.e. Block 2, Hoi Tak Gardens, 13-17 Wing Fat Lane, Tuen Mun) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from January 4, 2022 to January 13, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before January 15, 2022.

The Government set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" yesterday and requested persons subject to compulsory testing to collect combined nasal and throat swab samples at the stations to undergo a COVID-19 virus test before 12.30am today. As at 12.30am today, around 195 residents had undergone testing, among which one test result was indeterminate. For the sake of prudence, the concerned person and the relevant close contact has been hospitalised and sent to the quarantine centre for follow-up respectively. The test results of other persons subject to compulsory testing were negative.

After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today, the Government took enforcement action in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wore a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 12.30pm. Test records of around 90 persons subject to compulsory testing were checked. Nobody was found to have not undergone compulsory testing. Taking into account the above

situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Yuen Long District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Department of Health and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department mobilised around 150 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including bottled water, canned food and instant noodles, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks was also provided to each person subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification.

The Government reminds the about 20 households who have not answered the door to contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after reading the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will 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 or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

