

## FEHD largely completes vetting of applications for fifth and sixth round of Anti-epidemic Fund with subsidies disbursed to catering sector, commercial bathhouse and places of public entertainment sectors

To provide further relief to the sectors directly affected by the tightened social distancing measures, the Government launched the Catering Business Subsidy Scheme, the Food Courts Subsidy Scheme, the Commercial Bathhouse Licence Holder Subsidy Scheme and the Places of Public Entertainment Licence Holder Subsidy Scheme under the fifth and sixth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF), and the Dishware Washing Trade Subsidy Scheme under the sixth round of AEF. A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (May 24) that the FEHD has received about 20 920 applications and about 20 150 applications for the relevant subsidy schemes under AEF 5.0 and AEF 6.0 respectively, and completed vetting of a total of about 41 010 applications, with a total of around \$4.976 billion in subsidies disbursed so far. The amount disbursed accounts for 99.9 per cent of the total amount of subsidies.

The spokesman said, "The remaining cases that have yet to be completed are mainly related to re-issue of licences or pending supplementary information or documentary proof to be provided by the applicants. These applicants should follow up the relevant matters or submit the required documents as soon as possible so as to complete all the procedures."

The Catering Business Subsidy Scheme under AEF 6.0 provides a one-off subsidy ranging from \$100,000 to \$500,000 to eligible licence holders of general restaurants, light refreshment restaurants, marine restaurants and factory canteens in operation according to the floor areas of the premises as specified on their licences, to provide relief for catering premises providing dine-in services. For each eligible catering outlet which is also running a karaoke establishment, nightclub and bar or pub and has closed the whole of its licensed premises as directed under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), it is eligible to apply for an additional one-off subsidy of \$50,000 according to the respective business.

The Government also provides financial support to licensees of eligible food factory licences in food courts inside shopping malls. Each licensee of an eligible licensed food factory in operation is eligible for a one-off subsidy ranging from \$20,000 to \$100,000 according to the licensed area of its premises.

Separately, the Commercial Bathhouse Licence Holder Subsidy Scheme provides a one-off subsidy of \$100,000 to each eligible licence holder of a commercial bathhouse. The Places of Public Entertainment Licence Holder Subsidy Scheme provides a one-off subsidy of \$100,000 for each eligible holder of a places of public entertainment licence (excluding cinema operators eligible under the Cinemas Subsidy Scheme) and \$20,000 for each eligible holder of a temporary places of public entertainment licence. Under the Dishware Washing Trade Subsidy Scheme, each eligible dishware washing operator will be provided with a one-off subsidy of \$80,000 or \$150,000 according to its average monthly water consumption.

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## **DH launches Quit in June campaign and one-week nicotine replacement therapy trial in support of World No Tobacco Day (with photo)**

In support of World No Tobacco Day, the Department of Health (DH) has launched the Quit in June campaign to promote tobacco-free life and to remind members of the public of the increased risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 associated with smoking.

The World Health Organization has marked May 31 as World No Tobacco Day annually to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocate effective tobacco control policy to reduce tobacco consumption. The theme for this year's World No Tobacco Day is "Tobacco: Threat to our environment". Tobacco pollutes the planet and damages the health of all people. Its cultivation, production, distribution and consumption also add unnecessary pressure to our planet's scarce resources and fragile ecosystems.

Attending the kick-off ceremony of the smoke-free publicity programme for World No Tobacco Day organised by the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health today (May 24), the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, called on smokers to quit smoking in order to reduce their risk of tobacco-related diseases and death.

Dr Lam pointed out that it is beneficial for smokers of all ages to quit smoking as it brings immediate and long-term health benefits. Smokers who stay tobacco-free for four weeks would be five times more likely to quit for good.

The DH has all along subvented non-governmental organisations to provide a wide range of free smoking cessation services and support. Smokers can make use of the mail-to-quit service from these service providers to have

cessation medications delivered to them by post. To further assist smokers to quit smoking, the DH has partnered with non-governmental organisations (Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Integrated Centre on Smoking Cessation and United Christian Nethersole Community Health Service) to provide a one-week trial pack of smoking cessation drugs for free. Smoking cessation drugs effectively alleviate withdrawal symptoms and can encourage quit attempts. Smokers can visit smoking cessation clinics of the above non-governmental organisations in person and will be provided with a one-week trial pack of nicotine replacement therapy for free on-site after a simple assessment. They can also make an appointment online ([www.livetobaccofree.hk/en/free-quit-tools/free-cessation-services.html](http://www.livetobaccofree.hk/en/free-quit-tools/free-cessation-services.html)) or call 1833 183 to receive the trial pack.

A course of nicotine replacement therapy generally lasts about eight to 12 weeks. If smokers decide to quit smoking after using the trial pack, they can enrol at the smoking cessation service provided at the smoking cessation clinics.

Smokers can call 1833 183 or visit the designated website [www.livetobaccofree.hk](http://www.livetobaccofree.hk) for more information on quitting and the available supporting tools and services. They can also download the "Quit Smoking App" to keep track of their progress in quitting and get tips to deal with cravings and stay tobacco-free.



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## [Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 0.00am today (May 24), a total of 484 patients who tested positive for COVID-19 are currently hospitalised for treatment, including 35 new patients. Among the patients staying in isolation facilities, 84 patients are in isolation wards, 18 patients are in second-tier isolation wards and 39 patients are in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, of which 12 in total are new patients. The rest of the confirmed patients are hospitalised or readmitted due to other medical reasons. Those patients have recovered and are non-infectious, and therefore do not need to be treated in

isolation facilities. Among the hospitalised patients, 10 of them are in critical condition and eight are in serious condition, of which three critical patients are receiving intensive care. There were 63 patients who have recovered, including 42 patients who have been discharged. In addition, no confirmed patient passed away in public hospitals yesterday.

In the fifth wave of the epidemic, there are 49 905 patients who have recovered so far, including 49 608 patients who have been discharged. And since early 2020, there are 62 285 patients who have recovered, including 61 988 patients who have been discharged.

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.

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## **CHP investigates 20 confirmed and 59 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 10 cases pending status by nucleic acid tests as well as 161 cases tested positive by rapid antigen tests**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (May 24) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, May 24, the CHP was investigating 89 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (20 confirmed cases, 59 asymptomatic cases and 10 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 161 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RATs) (76 symptomatic cases and 85 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 761 405 and 449 431 cases that have tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of 34 imported cases (28 cases and six cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively). The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. Please refer to the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for more information.

Meanwhile, according to the whole genome sequencing analysis by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch, Hong Kong has recorded a total of 11 cases, 64 cases, 12 cases and three cases carrying the sub-lineages

BA.2.12, BA.2.12.1, BA.4 and BA.5 under the Omicron mutant strain respectively.

In addition, as of 0.00am, May 24, a total of 9 157 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded (i.e. no new reported cases), with 9 079 and 75 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as three deaths reported from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 9 370 death cases that have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday (May 23), the total number of confirmed cases was 332 040, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 198 759, 23 and 230 494 respectively.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that as the local situation of COVID-19 infection is still severe, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings. This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹The spokesman reminded that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who have yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected.

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## **Two persons sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order**

Two persons were sentenced by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (May 24) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) respectively.

The first case involved a woman aged 51, who was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that she must conduct quarantine at a

residential premises for seven days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, she left the place of quarantine on October 6, 2021, without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer. She was charged with contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of Cap. 599C and was sentenced today to imprisonment for 14 days suspended for 12 months.

The second case involved a man aged 76, who was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at a hotel for 14 days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, he passed some items he brought with him during immigration to another person on October 4, 2021, without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer. He was charged with contravening sections 8(4) and 8(5) of Cap. 599E and was fined \$8,000 today.

Breaching a compulsory 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 quarantine order is a criminal offence that the Government will not tolerate, and solemnly reminded the public to comply with the regulations. As of today, a total of 236 persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching quarantine orders and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to 14 weeks or a fine of up to \$15,000. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who has breached the relevant regulations.