

Hospital Authority announces positive patient cases detected via admission screening or testing and clusters of nosocomial COVID-19 infections

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority today (May 18) announced information regarding patients who tested positive via admission screening or testing with patients or staff members identified as close contacts and nosocomial COVID-19 infection cases:

The following are the statistics of patients who tested positive via admission screening or by testing in public hospitals with patients or staff members identified as close contacts:

Hospital/clinic	Number of patients who tested positive	Number of patients identified as close contacts	Number of staff members without appropriate personal protective equipment identified as close contacts
North District Hospital	2	2	—

Thorough cleaning and disinfection operations have been performed in the affected areas by the hospital. The hospital will continue to closely monitor the health condition of patients and staff members, and communicate with the Centre for Health Protection on the latest situation.

There have been no clusters of nosocomial infection cases reported in public hospitals today.

Update on supplies from Mainland

The Task Force of Supplies from the Mainland led by the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has been working closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government to explore various

means to stabilise the supply of goods from the Mainland to Hong Kong. In addition to road transport arrangements, transportation of goods by water and railway is already in service.

A spokesperson for the THB said that the "Sea Express" water transportation service from the Mainland to Hong Kong has been fully launched and its capacity is rising to increase the supplies of fresh food, other daily necessities and manufacturing materials. The current supply of fresh food from the Mainland is stable.

Currently, there are three water transportation routes between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, namely (1) from Shenzhen Yantian International Container Terminals to Hong Kong Kwai Tsing Container Terminals (KTCT); (2) from Shenzhen DaChan Bay Terminals to KTCT; and (3) from China Merchants Port (South China) Management Center (Shenzhen Mawan, Shekou and Chiwan Container Terminals) to Hong Kong River Trade Terminal and elsewhere. Together with the water transportation routes from other cities in Guangdong Province, including the routes from Guangzhou Lianhuashan Port, Nansha Port, Huadu Port, Zhongshan Huangpu Port and Zhuhai Doumen Port to different terminals in Hong Kong, the water transport capacity amounts to tens of thousands of tonnes daily.

The spokesperson said today (May 18) that Shenzhen operated 58 cargo vessel trips and transported around 6 670 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cross-boundary supplies by water yesterday (May 17), equivalent to about 26 190 tonnes of goods, of which around 10 TEUs (about 20 tonnes) were fresh food and around 6 660 TEUs (about 26 170 tonnes) were non-fresh food, according to information from the Mainland authorities.

Since the launch of services from the three ports in Shenzhen since February 18 to yesterday, a total of around 374 020 TEUs of cross-boundary supplies have been transported, equivalent to about 1 915 300 tonnes of goods, of which around 1 670 TEUs (about 14 370 tonnes) were fresh food and around 372 350 TEUs (about 1 900 930 tonnes) were non-fresh food.

To further ensure a stable goods supply to Hong Kong through land transport, a trial run of cargo transfer was conducted by the THB at a yard situated on Kam Pok Road, San Tin, Yuen Long, and it was completed smoothly. The THB will continue to work with the Mainland authorities to fully take forward cargo transfer arrangements on the Hong Kong side. It is a contingency measure in response to the latest epidemic situation in the city so as to reduce the risk of epidemic transmission in both the Mainland and Hong Kong, ensuring both smooth cross-boundary land transport and a stable goods supply to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, to avoid a spillover of the epidemic, the Transport Department (TD) has arranged for dedicated staff to conduct rapid antigen tests for cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers at various land boundary control points (BCPs) from February 28 onwards. Only drivers with a negative result are allowed to enter the Mainland. In order to further improve the accuracy of the tests, the TD has already switched to use rapid nucleic acid

tests at the BCPs. Starting from April 21, the sampling method for rapid nucleic acid tests has been further changed to nasopharyngeal swabs. A total of 2 925 rapid nucleic acid tests were conducted yesterday in which 24 drivers preliminarily tested positive. The TD has passed the cases to the Department of Health for follow-up.

The THB will closely monitor the situation and co-operate with the Mainland authorities to facilitate and implement various measures to ensure a stable goods supply to Hong Kong, with a view to complementing the supply through road, water and railway transport, enhancing capacity and efficiency as well as optimising the flow of cross-boundary supplies.

[Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order](#)

A 48-year-old man was sentenced to imprisonment for three weeks, suspended for 15 months, by the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (May 18) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at home for 14 days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, he left the place of quarantine on February 27, 2021, without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer. He was charged with contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today to imprisonment for three weeks, suspended for 15 months.

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 232 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.

Government makes "restriction-testing declaration" and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in King Tai House, On Tai Estate, Kwun Tong

The Government today (May 18) 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 5.30pm under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Kwun Tong (i.e. King Tai House, On Tai Estate, Kwun Tong, excluding the car park thereat and kindergarten on UG/F, 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 around noon tomorrow (May 19). The operation may be extended depending on test results.

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. Having reviewed a basket of factors, including the viral load in sewage, the information of relevant positive cases, and other circumstantial factors, and conducted a risk assessment, the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 11.30pm today. 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 make arrangement to facilitate specimen collection for people with impaired mobility. All persons in the "restricted area" who have tested positive in the past 14 days, including positive cases identified either by nucleic acid tests recorded by the Department of Health (DH) or by rapid antigen tests that have been self-declared to the DH, are not required to undergo testing in this compulsory testing exercise.

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 noon 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.

According to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any persons other than those specified above who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from May 12 to May 18, 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 May 20, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

The Housing Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2981 0029) which started operation at 5.30pm 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 \$10,000. 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 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.

LCQ17: Paid meal breaks for government employees

Following is a question by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung and a written reply by

the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

Regarding the arrangements for the provision of paid meal breaks by the Government for its employees, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number and percentage of government employees (including civil servants and full-time or part-time staff employed on non-civil service contract terms) who are not entitled to paid meal breaks, together with a breakdown by government department, mode of employment, grade, salary group, conditioned hours of work per week, and length of service;

(2) of the respective numbers of Model Scale 1 (MOD 1) staff who were entitled and not entitled to paid meal breaks in each year since the completion of the review on the conditioned hours of work for MOD 1 Grades by the Civil Service Bureau in 2014, as well as the relevant percentages, together with a breakdown by government department; and

(3) whether it has plans to review the conditioned hours of work of various grades, and provide paid meal breaks for all government employees, so as to resolve the problem of different pay for the same work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

There is no uniform conditioned hours of work per week in the civil service. Two different systems of conditioned hours of work per week have been established, which are "gross" (i.e. the conditioned hours are inclusive of meal breaks) and "net" (i.e. the conditioned hours does not include meal breaks) respectively. Specific conditioned hours of work per week are laid down for different grades of civil servants, including civilian and disciplined services staff, according to operational requirements and other relevant considerations. For civilian grades, the more common gross conditioned hours of work is 44 hours per week, while for net conditioned hours of work is 45 hours per week.

The conditioned hours of work per week and the manner in which they are prescribed are not necessarily related to whether staff have meal breaks. Except in rare situations where operations do not allow, departments would as far as possible arrange formal meal breaks for their staff under the net conditioned hours system if they so wish. In fact, the vast majority of staff in this category have formal meal breaks, but a small number of them (e.g. Motor Driver, Workman II, Foreman, etc, of individual departments who are required to work shifts and whose working hours do not span the traditional meal times) may choose to have rest breaks/light refreshments during their day's work when necessary, so as to avoid getting off work late.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung is as follows:

(1) As at December 31, 2021, about 24 130 civil servants (i.e. around 13.7 per cent of the serving civil service strength) were on a net conditioned hours system. The distribution of the relevant civil servants by grade/rank is at Annex 1. The Civil Service Bureau does not maintain figures on other categories as requested in the question. We also do not have information on meal breaks of full-time or part-time staff engaged under the Non-Civil Service Contract Staff Scheme.

(2) As at December 31, 2021, there were about 7 190 Model Scale 1 civil servants, including about 40 of them (i.e. around 0.6 per cent of the total strength of the grade) who were on a gross conditioned hours system and about 7 150 of them (i.e. around 99.4 per cent of the total strength of the grade) were on a net conditioned hours system. The distribution of the relevant civil servants by grade and their respective departments is at Annex 2.

(3) The Government is open to proposals on reduction of conditioned hours of work for individual grades. However, as the stipulated conditioned hours of work has been taken into account in determining the overall remuneration package offered to different civil service grades, a change from the net to gross conditioned hours system means a reduction in conditioned hours. A reduction in the conditioned hours of a particular grade without any corresponding change to its pay is in effect an improvement to the pay and conditions of service of that grade. Therefore, such proposals should be subject to their fulfilment of the three pre-requisites (i.e. cost neutrality, no additional manpower and maintaining the same level of service to the public) as well as the "same grade, same conditioned hours of work" principle. There were cases where the conditioned hours of various grades had been successfully reduced from the net to gross system, with the most recent example being the reduction of the conditioned hours of work of the Car Park Attendant II grade from 45 hours net per week to 45 hours gross per week with effect from June 1, 2019.

The present position of conditioned hours of work has evolved over the years and has taken into account recommendations of the relevant advisory bodies as well as other considerations. We have no plan to review the conditioned hours of work for different grades/ranks. In considering the conditions of service for civil servants, the Government must ensure the prudent use of public funds by taking into account the overall level and efficiency of public services and the burden on taxpayers.