

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Ka Yiu House, Ka Shing Court, Fanling

â€‹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 Fanling (i.e. Ka Yiu House, Ka Shing Court, Fanling, excluding the kindergarten on G/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 10am 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 10am 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 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.

LCQ13: Prevention and treatment of osteoporosis

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

Regarding the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis, will the

Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of new cases of Hong Kong females suffering from osteoporosis in each of the past five years; if so, of a breakdown by age group; if not, whether it will consider compiling such statistics starting from the current financial year; if not, of the reasons for that;

(2) given that individual District Health Centres (DHCs) currently provide osteoporosis screening service for members of the public, of the service attendance and the expenditure involved so far; whether it will consider allocating additional resources to regularise the service (e.g. by incorporating clauses into the service contracts awarded in the current financial year for the operation of DHCs and DHC Expresses to require the inclusion of osteoporosis screening as a regular service item); if so, of the details (including the estimated expenditure); if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it has been reported that there is a downward trend in the age of people suffering from osteoporosis in recent years, whether the Government and the Hospital Authority will consider allocating additional resources in the current financial year to step up efforts for osteoporosis prevention, screening and treatment at different levels as early as possible; if so, of the work plan and the estimated expenditure; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Osteoporosis is a chronic metabolic disease of bone which leads to a reduction in bone density. The Department of Health (DH) mainly provides health promotion and disease prevention services including health assessment and counselling, while the Hospital Authority (HA) mainly handles patients with osteoporosis who require treatment. Having consulted the DH and the HA, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Alice Mak is as follows:

(1) The DH and the HA do not maintain statistics of osteoporosis. The clinical conditions of patients with osteoporosis are pervasive and involve different specialties in the HA, including Endocrinology and Metabolism, Geriatrics, Family Medicine, Orthopaedics and Traumatology, and various service units. Some of the services did not assign codes to patients by disease types and therefore the HA does not maintain comprehensive statistics on the number of patients and the number of new patients with osteoporosis.

(2) Services of District Health Centres (DHCs) and DHC Expresses focus on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, which include health promotion and education, health risk factors assessment, disease screening, chronic disease management and community rehabilitation, etc. At the health management and promotion level, DHCs will organise educational activities to promote prevention of osteoporosis and osteoporotic fracture. DHCs aim to enhance the public's understanding of osteoporosis and prevention measures of

osteoporotic fracture through prevention-oriented and evidence-based measures, which include education on sufficient calcium and vitamin D levels, regular weight-bearing exercise, fall prevention, and avoidance of tobacco and excessive alcohol. For high risk elderly, DHCs and DHC Expresses will provide muscle strength and balance training, and offer advice on mobility aids and gadgets, home safety and home modification as appropriate. In addition, for patients referred by the HA or network medical professionals to join the fracture hip rehabilitation programme, individualised treatment sessions by a range of allied health professionals (including physiotherapists and occupational therapists) and suggestion on home modification would also be offered by DHCs to prevent repeated falls. Meanwhile, DHCs and DHC Expresses will collaborate with local community partners and healthcare providers across different sectors to provide information on osteoporosis services or make referrals to those interested/needed.

As there is currently no sufficient scientific evidence to support a Government policy for carrying out osteoporosis screening, DHCs have no plan to provide osteoporosis screening services to the public at the moment. The Food and Health Bureau will keep in view relevant services of DHCs which aim to provide evidence-based, effective and efficient primary healthcare services via district-based medical-social collaboration in the community under the steer of the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development.

(3) To prevent osteoporosis, elderly persons should adopt a healthy lifestyle. This can be achieved by doing regular physical and weight-bearing exercises, maintaining optimal body weight, eating a balanced diet for adequate calcium and vitamin D intake, having appropriate sunlight exposure for vitamin D synthesis, and refraining from smoking and excessive drinking. Besides, elderly persons should take extra fall prevention precautions to further reduce the risks of fracture and other complications.

The Elderly Health Service (EHS) of the DH disseminates health education messages on the prevention of osteoporosis and falls to elderly persons and their care-givers through health talks, individual counselling and leaflets etc. Relevant health information on osteoporosis, including its signs and symptoms, prevention and treatment, has been uploaded onto the EHS website for public's reference.

Separately, since 2017-18, the HA has established Acute Geriatric Fragility Fracture (AGFF) Nursing Coordination Services in 10 hospitals progressively (Note), to co-ordinate the multidisciplinary clinical pathway for rehabilitation, and conduct educational talks for patients and their care takers with emphasis on bone health management and fall prevention. The HA has further expanded AGFF Nursing Coordination Services to Kwong Wah Hospital, Tseung Kwan O Hospital, Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital and Pok Oi Hospital by the end of the first quarter of 2022. In addition, North District Hospital will also expand its hip fracture treatment services. The HA has earmarked an additional provision of \$5.1 million in 2022-23 to implement the above measures. The HA is constantly monitoring the progress of AGFF Nursing Coordination Services and make evaluation in due course.

Apart from AGFF Nursing Coordination Services, the HA clinicians will also make referrals on follow-up check-up service, including dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry for bone mineral densities, when indicated. Besides, secondary prevention of osteoporotic fractures by pharmaceutical treatment can be prescribed by various specialists, including Endocrinologist, Geriatricians, Family Physicians and Orthopaedic Surgeons for indicated patients.

As mentioned in part (2) of this reply, the Government adopts an evidence-based approach. Currently there is insufficient scientific evidence to support the provision of bone mineral density screening service. People who are at risk of developing osteoporosis due to, for example, underweight, previous history of bone fracture, premature menopause, smoking habit or heavy drinking, or a family history of osteoporosis or fracture, should take active control of the risk factors and seek medical advice on appropriate management options, such as bone mineral density assessment or treatment. At present, under the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme, eligible elders aged 65 or above are provided with an annual voucher amount of \$2,000 for them to use private primary healthcare services that best suit their health needs, including those for the management of osteoporosis and other chronic diseases.

Note: Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital and United Christian Hospital (2017-2018); Queen Mary Hospital, Prince of Wales Hospital and Tuen Mun Hospital (2019-2020); Caritas Medical Centre and Princess Margaret Hospital (2020-2021); and North District Hospital and Yan Chai Hospital (2021-2022)

LCQ22: Eligibility review and oath-taking arrangements for public elections

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hok-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

At present, there are discrepancies in the arrangements for eligibility review of candidates and statutory oath-taking for elected candidates among different types of public elections. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in accordance with the Decision on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region announced by the National People's Congress on March 11, 2021, the eligibility of candidates for the Election Committee members, the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council (LegCo) Members shall be subject to the assessment and validation of the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, whether the Government will, by way of local legislation, require all candidates of public elections to first go through the eligibility review procedure; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given the Government's proposal that rural representatives-elect be required to take a written oath before holding office, and that such an arrangement is different from the oath-taking arrangements for elected candidates of the LegCo and District Council elections, of the detailed justifications for that, and whether it has assessed if such an arrangement is sufficient to reflect the solemnity of oath-taking;

(3) whether it has studied if other jurisdictions have adopted written oath as a form of statutory oath-taking for elected candidates of public elections; if it has studied, of the details; and

(4) with regard to public elections overseen by the Electoral Affairs Commission, if any elected candidate fails to fulfil the statutory oath-taking requirements and is thus disqualified from holding office, whether the Government will recover from the person concerned all payments, such as remuneration and allowances, that he/she has received after being elected; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office and the Home Affairs Bureau, the consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) As stipulated in the Decision on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) made by the National People's Congress (NPC) on March 11, 2021, and Annexes 1 and 2 to the Basic Law, the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee (CERC) of the HKSAR shall be set up and responsible for reviewing and confirming the eligibility of candidates for Election Committee (EC) members, for the office of Chief Executive (CE) and for the Legislative Council (LegCo). To implement the requirement, the HKSAR Government has, through the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Ordinance 2021, added section 9A in the Chief Executive Election Ordinance (Cap. 569) (CEE0) to provide for the composition of the CERC and amended the relevant electoral laws to implement the requirement for the CERC to review and confirm the eligibility of candidates for the EC Subsector Ordinary Elections, the LegCo Election and the CE Election.

The function of the CERC is clearly stipulated in the Basic Law and

related decision of the NPC, and has been fully and accurately implemented in local electoral laws. Currently, the Government does not have plan to expand or change the functions of the CERC.

(2) and (3) Article 6 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region stipulates that a resident of the HKSAR who stands for election or assumes public office shall confirm in writing or take an oath to uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and swear allegiance to the HKSAR of the PRC (uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the HKSAR) in accordance with the law. On this, section 42A of the Schedule to the CEE0 provides that members-elect of the EC must submit a written oath to uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the HKSAR in order to become a member of the EC. All the members of the EC constituted on October 22, 2021, have complied with the written oath requirement. We have confirmed with the relevant Central Authority that the aforementioned written oath complies with the oath-taking requirements for public officers. As the number of rural representatives (RRs) is similar to that of EC members, after reviewing the oath-taking arrangements for the EC and in other public elections, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) considers that the EC model, whereby a written oath is required before assumption of office, better suits the case for RRs operationally. We have not further studied the situation in other jurisdictions.

(4) Section 2(1) of the Interpretation of Article 104 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China passed by the Standing Committee of the NPC stipulates that "[n]o public office shall be assumed, no corresponding powers and functions shall be exercised, and no corresponding entitlements shall be enjoyed by anyone who fails to lawfully and validly take the oath or who declines to take the oath".

Section 21 of the Oaths and Declarations Ordinance (Cap.11) provides that any person who declines or neglects to take an oath duly requested which he is required to take by Part IV of the Ordinance, shall, if he has not entered on his office, be disqualified from entering on it. That provision is applicable to the oaths to be made by the CE, LegCo members, and District Council (DC) members. In addition, the Government would introduce the Rural Representative Election (Amendment) Bill 2022 to the LegCo on May 18, 2022. If the Bill is passed, an elected RR who breaches the oath or fails to comply with the legal requirement and conditions of upholding the Basic Law and bearing allegiance to the HKSAR will be disqualified from holding office; no corresponding powers and functions shall be exercised, and no corresponding entitlements shall be enjoyed.

If a LegCo member is disqualified for not complying with the aforementioned requirement, the LegCo Commission would take into account the actual circumstances of individual cases in deciding the appropriate course of actions for handling remuneration-related matters, such as taking legal actions to recover the remuneration.

As regards the cases relating to disqualification of DC members from

holding office, the HAD would handle the remuneration arrangements in accordance with the law and the Guidelines on the Remuneration Package for Members of the District Councils of the HKSAR. If necessary, the HAD will take legal actions to recover the remuneration.

Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (May 18) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department have been collecting sewage samples for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in some areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the Housing Department and the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 170 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Southern District – Wah Fu (I) Estate and Wah Fu (II) Estate, Pokfulam Terrace and World Fair Court
- Kwun Tong District – Choi Ying Estate, Choi Fook Estate, Choi Ha Estate, 71-79 Ting Fu Street, San Hei Building, Yen Ning Building, Yick Fu House, Kien May Building, Dor Hei Building, On Tak Building, On Tai Building, On Cheung House, On Yin Building, Ting Shing House, Ting On Building, Ting Yip Building, Ting Yip Mansion, Ting Hing Building, Kathy's Court, Fu On Building, Tak Kee House, Tak Cheong House, Tak Ming Building, Chit Wong Mansion, King Wah Building, Yan Wing Mansion, Wing Ming Building, Wing Shing Building, Wing Ying Building, Shui Kei House, Park Mansion, Lap Hing Building, Hing Fung Building, Wah Fat House, Kam Wo Building, Sheung Heu Building, Tsut Hei Building, 2-2B Ting Fu Street, 18-22 Ting Yip Street and 12-14 Ting Yue Square
- Wan Chai District – Elizabeth House, Kei Wa Building, Besthing Mansion, Lockhart House, Hyde Centre, Dandenong Mansion, Wai Sun Building, Chi King Court, Wah Fat Mansion, Golden Jubilee House, Ascot Mansion and Lockhart House

Members of the public may refer to (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose of them properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

Composite Interest Rate: End of April 2022

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (May 18) the composite interest rate at the end of April 2022 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 3 basis points to 0.27 per cent at the end of April 2022, from 0.24 per cent at the end of March 2022 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The increase in composite interest rate mainly reflected an increase in the weighted funding cost for deposits during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex) (Note 2).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of April 2022 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk).

Note 1: The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest-rate-sensitive liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of

deposit and other debt instruments, and all other liabilities that do not involve any formal payment of interest but the values of which are sensitive to interest rate movements (such as Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits) on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

Note 2: Since June 2019, the composite interest rate and weighted deposit rate have been calculated based on the new local "Interest rate risk in the banking book" (IRRBB) framework. As such, these figures are not strictly comparable with those of previous months.