

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Ping Wah House, Lok Wah North Estate, Kwun Tong

â€‹The Government today (May 17) 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 6pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Kwun Tong (i.e. Ping Wah House, Lok Wah North Estate, Kwun Tong, excluding Lok Wah North Estate Office 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 8am tomorrow (May 18). 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 8am 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 11 to May 17, 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 19, 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 will provide food packs and necessity packs for persons subject to compulsory testing, so as to facilitate the meal arrangements and daily needs of some persons subject to compulsory testing. In addition, the Social Welfare Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 6279 3951) which starts operation at 6pm 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.

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 17) that Shenzhen operated 60 cargo vessel trips and transported around 6 960 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cross-boundary supplies by water yesterday (May 16), equivalent to about 28 650 tonnes of goods, of which around 10 TEUs (about 140 tonnes) were fresh food and around 6 950 TEUs (about 28 510 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 367 360 TEUs of cross-boundary supplies have been transported, equivalent to about 1 889 100 tonnes of goods, of which around 1 670 TEUs (about 14 350 tonnes) were fresh food and around 365 690 TEUs (about 1 874 750 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 2 860 rapid nucleic acid tests were conducted yesterday in which 20 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.

Sample of uncooked dumpling wrapper detected with excessive preservative

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 17) that a sample of uncooked loose-packed dumpling wrapper was found to contain a preservative, benzoic acid, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a shop in Siu Sai Wan for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained benzoic acid at a level of 6,880 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 1,000 ppm."

The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected product. The CFS is tracing the source of the affected product.

Benzoic acid is a preservative of low toxicity. However, long-term exposure to excessive benzoic acid may affect health, such as by causing gastrointestinal disturbances.

The spokesman reminded the food trade that the use of preservatives in food must comply with the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD). Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.

ExCo endorses reorganisation of government structure for sixth-term Government

The Executive Council (ExCo) today (May 17) considered and endorsed a package of proposals to reorganise the structure of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to take effect from July 1, upon the request of the sixth-term Chief Executive-elect (CE-elect).

The package comprises various proposals initiated by the current-term Chief Executive (CE) in her 2021 Policy Address announced last October, and presented in detail to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in January this year. These proposals, which have been accepted in full by the CE-elect, are:

- (1) to set up a new Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau to take over the culture, arts and sports portfolios from the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), as well as the film, creative industries and tourism portfolios from the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau;
- (2) to split the Transport and Housing Bureau into two policy bureaux, namely the Transport and Logistics Bureau and the Housing Bureau;
- (3) to retitle the Innovation and Technology Bureau as the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau;
- (4) to reorganise the HAB into the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau;
- (5) to expand and retitle the Environment Bureau as the Environment and Ecology Bureau to take over from the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) the policies on environmental hygiene, food safety, agriculture and fisheries, veterinary public health, etc;
- (6) to revamp the FHB as the Health Bureau; and
- (7) to implement a number of policy transfers between bureaux and offices to rationalise and consolidate policy responsibilities, including the transfer of policy areas which are closely related, including manpower development, retirement protection and poverty alleviation, under a single policy bureau, namely the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

The ExCo-endorsed package has also included additional proposals sought by the CE-elect with a view to strengthening the government structure at the top level. They are:

1. the creation of three new positions of Politically Appointed Officials at the rank of Deputy Secretary of Department as provided for under Article 48(5) of the Basic Law, namely a Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, a Deputy Financial Secretary and a Deputy Secretary for Justice; and

2. strengthening the existing offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS), the Financial Secretary (FS), and the Secretary for Justice (SJ) by adding to each office one directorate officer, and creating a Political Assistant post to support the SJ.

Under the reorganisation proposal, the number of policy bureaux will increase from 13 to 15. Nine policy bureaux will be put under the supervision of the CS, while the FS will oversee six policy bureaux. The proposed organisation chart for the sixth-term Government is at Annex 1, while detailed justifications for the proposals could be found in the LegCo Brief at Annex 2 issued today.

"As the incumbent CE has said in her meeting with the CE-elect on May 9, the current-term Government will render full assistance to the Office of the CE-elect with a view to securing all necessary approvals as soon as possible. We will submit the reorganisation proposals to the LegCo later today. Together with representatives of the Office of the CE-elect, relevant officials will attend the first meeting of the newly formed LegCo Subcommittee on this subject to be held on May 20 to answer Members' questions," a Government spokesman said.

"The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs will shortly give notice to move a resolution in the LegCo in June to provide for the transfer of functions exercisable by a public officer under relevant ordinances to another public officer in order to implement the new government structure with effect from July 1 this year.

"We will also submit proposals in June to the Establishment Subcommittee and the Finance Committee for approval of the staffing and financial implications arising from the reorganisation exercise," he added.

The package will entail an increase of 13 Politically Appointed Officials and 57 civil service posts at a total salary cost of about \$95 million per year.

Tender results of one-year HONIA-indexed Floating Rate Notes under Institutional Bond Issuance Programme

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government), announced that a tender of one-year HONIA-indexed Floating Rate Notes (issue number 01GH2305) under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme was held today (May

17).

A total of HK\$1.5 billion one-year HONIA-indexed Floating Rate Notes were allocated today. A total of HK\$4.275 billion tender applications were received. The bid-to-cover ratio, i.e. the ratio of notes applied for to notes issued, is 2.85. The highest spread accepted is 0.25 per cent.

HKSAR Government Institutional Bond Issuance Programme Government Bond tender results

Tender results of one-year HONIA-indexed Floating Rate Notes under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme:

Tender Date	: May 17, 2022
Issue Number	: 01GH2305
Stock Code	: 4254 (HKGB FRN 2305)
Issue and Settlement Date	: May 18, 2022
Tenor	: one-year
Maturity Date	: May 18, 2023
Amount Applied	: HK\$4.275 billion
Amount Allotted	: HK\$1.5 billion
Bid-to-Cover Ratio*	: 2.85
Highest Spread Accepted	: 0.25 per cent
Average Spread Accepted	: 0.14 per cent
Pro-rata Ratio	: About 70 per cent
Average Tender Spread	: 0.29 per cent

*Calculated as the amount of notes applied for over the amount of notes issued.