

Latest arrangements for Marine Department services

In light of the announcement of the Government today (January 5) that the special work arrangements for government employees will be extended until January 20, a spokesman for the Marine Department (MD) announced that the licensing and port formalities services at the Yau Ma Tei Marine Office, the Tuen Mun Marine Office, the Sai Kung Marine Office, the Tai Po Marine Office, the Aberdeen Marine Office, the Cheung Chau Marine Office and the Shau Kei Wan Marine Office; the seafarers' examination and certification services; mercantile marine services; and local vessel surveying and enquiry services will continue to be suspended until January 20. Those who have made an appointment for services or examinations will be separately informed of alternative arrangements.

The licensing and port formalities services at the Central Marine Office and other services provided by the MD will remain unaffected.

Land Registry releases statistics for December 2020

The Land Registry today (January 5) released its statistics for December 2020.

Land registration

* The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in December was 7,596 (+4.9 per cent compared with November and +94.4 per cent compared with December 2019)

* The 12-month moving average for December was 6,110 (5.3 per cent above the 12-month moving average for November but 2.0 per cent below that for December 2019)

* The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in December was \$70.3 billion (+6.6 per cent compared with November and +100.7 per cent compared with December 2019)

* Among the sale and purchase agreements, 6,067 were for residential units (-0.05 per cent compared with November but +90.5 per cent compared with December 2019)

* The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$58.7 billion (+1.1 per cent compared with November and +87.9 per cent compared with December 2019)

Statistics on sales of residential units do not include sale and purchase agreements relating to sales of units under the Home Ownership Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme unless the premium of the unit concerned has been paid after the sale restriction period.

Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months, the year-on-year rate of change and breakdown figures on residential sales have also been released.

As deeds may not be lodged with the Land Registry until up to 30 days after the transaction, these statistics generally relate to land transactions in the previous month.

Land search

* The number of searches of land registers made by the public in December was 411,759 (-8.5 per cent compared with November but +12.6 per cent compared with December 2019)

The statistics cover searches made at the counter, through the self-service terminals and via the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services.

[Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting \(with video\)](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (January 5):

Reporter: Question number one, for how long will the Government refuse the Hong Kong residents who are stuck in UK from returning home which they are fully entitled to, according to the Basic Law, especially as you have said that the measures to prevent imported cases are now watertight? And question number two, the Transport Department has offered a new service to car owners that will alert them if someone makes a search on their vehicles. Do you agree this sort of action from the Government is not very media friendly and will this sort of tip-off service be extended to other public services like

land and company searches? And why can't the media be exempted from this if the purpose is for news gathering? The final question is regarding recently the state media and also some local media have attacked a High Court judge for granting bail to Jimmy Lai, with some critics saying this sort of attacks actually put pressure on the Judiciary ahead of an appeal hearing. Can you tell us why the Government didn't issue a statement to hit back at these sort of comments? Is it because they are from the state media? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. First is I have just emphasised the importance of having watertight measures in ensuring that Hong Kong will not import confirmed cases from all over the world because the COVID-19 situation is still very severe in many parts of the world. The United Kingdom and South Africa now are two of the high-risk places because of this new variant in the virus, and so for a while, many places – it's not just Hong Kong – have suspended flights from the United Kingdom because of this worry. You cannot blame those places including Hong Kong because the then-situation was very severe when we were told that this virus was 70 per cent more infectious, when we were told by the relevant minister in the United Kingdom government that it was almost out of control. If it was almost out of control in the United Kingdom and the receiving places like Hong Kong – we do have a lot of returnees from the United Kingdom accounting for about one third of arrivals at Hong Kong International Airport – if we did nothing, you imagine, it would be putting our city at great risk. So we have to take this measure, which was very difficult, because it involves Hong Kong residents and many of them are students or parents who have gone to visit the students and they need to come back. The Immigration Department have received about 190 requests for assistance. The Government will seriously look into the situation and see whether we could make some adjustments later on, but as far as I'm aware even the major airline flying between Hong Kong and London has suspended their flights until some time this month so we will together review the situation.

The second question is about Transport Department or about these so-called public registers where members of public could apply to inspect by paying a fee in most circumstances. We have to understand the purpose of allowing members of public to inspect these personal data held by the Government when that particular person came up to apply for something, whether it is a car license or they do a land transaction or they register a company so they have these personal data with us. As a government body we have to be responsible in ensuring the privacy of these persons, especially after what we have seen in the past one to two years that many people, when inspecting these public registers, got hold of the personal data and did all sorts of intimidation, doxxing that would harm the people. The administrative measure taken by the Transport Department is no more than just to alert the person that somebody has checked your personal data. That's it. I really don't see how this will undermine the work of the media and hence I do not see why media should be exempted from the administrative procedure that the Transport Department has put in place. Now I can tell you that other departments which possess public registers are reviewing along the same line, that whether they need to put in administrative measures taking into account the legal provisions as well as the nature of the registers that they are

holding.

Myself and the Secretary for Justice have time and again made public statements that we should respect the Judiciary, we should uphold judicial independence, we should not criticise judges for their decisions without any grounds or facts, that is, pure allegations. Similarly we condemn any such personal attacks on the judges. But if there are people who want to express a view based on their understanding of the law and the facts and the evidence, then this is what the media always advocate – this is a freedom of speech. I really would not see how these comments would put pressure on the Judiciary. I understand the departing Chief Justice may be holding a press conference later today. I'm sure if you ask him he will say the same. Every judge has taken a judicial oath and they would not be intimidated or undermined by these comments in their impartiality in adjudicating cases on the basis of the facts and the evidence before them, so there is no worry of that sort of situation.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

A dry December

The weather for December 2020 was cloudier than usual in Hong Kong. The mean amount of cloud in the month was 62 per cent, 10 per cent above the normal figure of 52 per cent. The monthly mean temperature of 18.1 degrees was 0.2 degrees above the normal figure of 17.9 degrees. The month was also much drier than usual with a total rainfall of only 1.5 millimetres, about 6 per cent of the normal figure of 26.8mm. The annual total rainfall in 2020 was 2395.0mm, similar to the annual normal figure of 2398.5mm.

Dominated by a dry winter monsoon, the weather of Hong Kong was generally fine and dry on the first eight days of the month with rather cool mornings on December 4 and 5. With a broad band of clouds covering the coast of Guangdong and the moderation of the winter monsoon, the weather became milder and mainly cloudy with a few light rain patches from December 9 to 13.

Under the influence of an intense winter monsoon, local weather became appreciably cooler from December 14 to 17. There were also a few light rain patches from December 14 to 15. With the replenishment of a dry winter monsoon, local weather became mainly fine and dry from December 18 to 21. It was also cold on the mornings of December 19 and 20. Affected by a cloud band over the coast of Guangdong, the weather became cloudier in the next two days with a few rain patches on December 23.

With clouds thinning out, the weather of Hong Kong turned mainly fine and dry during the day on December 24. Visibility was rather low in some areas in that afternoon. Affected by an easterly airstream, local weather

became cloudier with a few light rain patches and mist at the beginning on the Christmas Day. Under the influence of a relatively dry easterly airstream, it was generally fine, mild and dry during the day from December 26 to 29. With plenty of sunshine, the temperature at the Hong Kong Observatory soared to 24.5 degrees on the afternoons of December 27 and 29, the highest of the month.

Meanwhile, a cold front moved across southern China on the night of December 29. Under the influence of the associated intense cold surge, the weather of Hong Kong became windy and significantly colder on December 30. It was cold, windy and very dry on the New Year's Eve with the temperature at the Hong Kong Observatory dropping to 8.1 degrees in the morning, the lowest of the month. The temperature at Tai Mo Shan even dropped to minus 1.2 degrees.

One tropical cyclone occurred over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in December 2020.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in December are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for December are tabulated in Table 2.

Mobile specimen collection stations and community testing centres provide free testing for persons subject to compulsory testing

With the prolonged local COVID-19 epidemic situation, there has been a widespread number of confirmed cases across all districts. Some of the confirmed cases have been asymptomatic which indicates the existence of many silent transmission chains within the community. The Government has exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to cover a number of buildings across the territory under compulsory testing notices and require residents, workers and visitors to undergo testing. To facilitate persons covered under the compulsory testing notices to undergo testing, the Government has arranged for testing service providers to set up mobile specimen collection stations at a number of locations in various districts to provide free and convenient testing services for them.

The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations already in operation in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are at the Annex. A new

mobile specimen collection station will be set up in Princess Margaret Hospital to provide free testing services for the workers, visitors and patients of the hospital. The Government has taken into account the testing service needs of individual buildings covered under compulsory testing notices and the existing testing services near the buildings in the course of setting up mobile specimen collection stations.

The Government will decide whether it is necessary to increase the number of stations, adjust or extend the operation periods of the stations after reviewing their usage and the public's demand for the testing service.

Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres in all districts to receive testing free of charge. Separately, as there have been several COVID-19 confirmed cases in Kat Hing Wai, Kam Tin Heung, Yuen Long recently, the Community Testing Centre in Yuen Long Town East Community Hall extends free testing service to residents of Kat Hing Wai from today (January 5) until January 7 (Thursday) tentatively. The operating hours of the centres are from 8am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 8pm daily. The centres provide booking as well as on-site registration services. Members of the public are only required to input simple personal information, and select the testing centre and time slot in the 24-hour appointment booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk). The centres accord priority to those who make bookings in advance.

A Government spokesman said, "The testing service providers will provide specimen collection services by combined nasal and throat swabs at the mobile specimen collection stations and community testing centres for testing free of charge. Generally speaking, mobile specimen collection stations only provide testing services for local residents and workers who are subject to compulsory testing."

People whose test results are negative will be informed by SMS notifications through their mobile phones. Persons subject to compulsory testing must properly keep the relevant records. If any specimen tested shows a preliminarily positive result, the specimen will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Department of Health (DH) for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be followed up and announced by the Centre for Health Protection of the DH.

The Government reminds the public that they can undergo COVID-19 testing for free through various means. For details on other free-of-charge testing means other than mobile specimen collection stations and community testing centres, please refer to the following webpage: www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html. If a person has symptoms, he or she should seek medical attention immediately and should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or community testing centres.

The spokesman urged all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with exposure to infection risk (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed

cases) to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.