

LCQ18: Mutual recognition of vaccination records

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 (June 9):

Question:

Some members of the public have indicated that they have received vaccination against COVID-19, with a view to their travelling between Hong Kong and the Mainland, when traveller clearance between the two places fully resumes, without being required to undergo compulsory quarantine. Nevertheless, as the types of vaccines administered to the people of the two places and the vaccination records held by them as proof are different, such members of the public are worried that in the absence of a mechanism for mutual recognition of the vaccination records of the two places, it will be difficult for the people of both places to resume normal travel between the two places. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has discussed with the relevant Mainland departments the establishment of a mechanism for mutual recognition of the vaccination records of the two places, so as to prepare for the full resumption of traveller clearance between the two places; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it has discussed with the relevant Mainland departments the conditions for the full resumption of traveller clearance (e.g. the types of vaccines recognised, and whether inbound travellers will be required to undergo antibody tests) to let members of the public have a clear target, so as to increase the incentives for them to receive vaccination; and
- (3) whether it will add a new function to the electronic vaccination records to allow inclusion of records of non-locally received vaccinations to facilitate holders of the vaccination records to prove that they have completed vaccination?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Hon Alice Mak is as follows:

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has been communicating and liaising closely with the relevant authorities in the Mainland and Macao Special Administrative Region Government on disease

prevention and control measures. We are actively exploring the resumption of normal cross-boundary activities amongst residents of the three places in a gradual and orderly manner when the epidemic situation in the three places is under control and without increasing public health risks.

Currently, non-fully vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in the Mainland and Macao, whether arriving in Hong Kong via the airport or land boundary control points, are subject to 14-day compulsory quarantine at home if they did not return under the Return2hk Scheme, and five compulsory tests after arrival in Hong Kong. As regards fully vaccinated persons, the compulsory quarantine period is shortened to seven days, with a subsequent seven-day self-monitoring period and three compulsory tests after arrival in Hong Kong.

Fully vaccinated persons means persons who have received the necessary doses as stipulated in guidelines of a COVID-19 vaccination course 14 days prior to their arrival in Hong Kong. For persons arriving in Hong Kong whose vaccines were administered outside Hong Kong, apart from the COVID-19 vaccines already recognised for use in Hong Kong, vaccines on the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing or Pre-qualification lists, as well as vaccines recognised for use by Stringent Regulatory Authorities as designated by the WHO or the National Medical Products Administration would also be accepted. The Government has uploaded the list of relevant vaccines to the COVID-19 thematic website, and will update the list from time to time.

For those who have completed vaccination outside of Hong Kong with vaccines on the aforementioned list, currently they can present their vaccination records issued by relevant local authorities and complete a declaration form to meet the requirements under the vaccine bubble. We are considering ways to further facilitate Hong Kong residents to make use of their non-local vaccination records.

LCQ2: Encouraging members of public to receive vaccination

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 9):

Question:

As at the end of last month, there were about one million members of the public in the territory who had received two doses of vaccines against the coronavirus disease 2019, accounting for 15 per cent of the local population aged 16 or above. An expert on epidemiology has pointed out that such a take-

up rate is inadequate to build a herd immunity barrier to guard Hong Kong against the outbreak of a new wave of epidemic. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the targeted publicity and education programmes to allay public concerns over the safety of the vaccines;

(2) whether it will adopt a multi-pronged approach to spur various public and private organisations to provide incentives to encourage their staff to receive vaccination; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as an expert on epidemiology has pointed out that persons who have been fully vaccinated have a very low chance of contracting or spreading the disease, whether the Government will relax the restrictions on immigration, social distancing, resumption of classes, etc. to which such persons are subject; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the "Early Vaccination for All" campaign with an aim to building an immune barrier in Hong Kong as soon as possible by significantly raising the vaccination rate during the critical period from now until the end of August, thereby restoring normality to society sooner rather than later.

In consultation with the Education Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan is as follows:

(1) The Government has followed the principles of openness, transparency, accuracy and timeliness and adopted a science-based approach to provide members of the public with the latest information on COVID-19 vaccines through different channels and made public the views of experts, so as to build up social momentum and improve citizens' willingness to get vaccinated.

To provide the public a one-stop destination to learn about the latest information on COVID-19 vaccines, we have launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme thematic website to explain the principles of the vaccines, their protection and need-to-know facts, etc. We have recently added new features to the thematic website and set up a data dashboard to publish latest information regarding vaccination, including the number of doses administered, remaining days of operation and remaining quotas of the Community Vaccination Centres, etc.

In terms of publicity and education, the Department of Health (DH) has produced a large amount of materials delivered via different media channels for promotion to urge members of the public to get vaccinated. We understand that science-based evidence is particularly important. The DH therefore invited family doctors to participate in informative programmes to assess whether different cases are suitable for receiving vaccines. For example, the

DH is now collaborating with the Hospital Authority and Radio Television Hong Kong for several weeks, through the programme "Vaccine Line", to explain whether different illnesses will affect the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccination. The programme also answers public enquiries so that members of the public would feel at ease about getting vaccinated.

The two vaccines currently provided in Hong Kong are safe, efficacious and of good quality. Having considered that members of the public are concerned about adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination, we issue a weekly press release to provide updated statistics and relevant information on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination. The comparison figures of adverse events out of those with and without vaccination as well as the respective baseline reference figures have also been uploaded to the thematic website. So far, there is no death case identified by the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation as having causal relationship with COVID-19 vaccination.

We will continue to disseminate accurate and comprehensive information on COVID-19 vaccination in an open and transparent manner. We will also step up monitoring of false information on vaccines within the community and make clarifications as necessary. For example, we have repeatedly explained that COVID-19 vaccines are being used in large scale around the world. This has provided us substantial real world data to prove that unless one has contraindications, the vast majority of people are suitable for vaccination. The public really does not need to wait and should get vaccinated as soon as possible. They should consult a doctor if there are any concerns.

(2) and (3) Since the start of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, about 2.71 million doses of vaccines had been administered and about 1.58 million of them were the first dose, accounting for 24.1 per cent of the population aged 16 or above in Hong Kong. To encourage members of the public to get vaccinated as soon as possible, various measures are being gradually rolled out by the Government and different sectors in the community.

Facilitating vaccination

To take the lead, government employees will be entitled to a day of vaccination leave or be allowed to apply for one day of authorised absence for each vaccination dose received. A high vaccine take-up rate is beneficial for our society and businesses. The Government appeals to organisations and enterprises to encourage their staff to get vaccinated, and to arrange vaccination leave and other facilitation measures where practicable.

Facilitating gatherings

The Government will further relax social distancing measures with the "vaccine bubble" concept as the basis, including relaxation of the maximum number of persons allowed at premises and group gatherings, the maximum capacity of premises and operation hours, the types of activities allowed, the distance among groups, and the mask-wearing requirement.

Facilitating travelling

The Government has shortened the quarantine period for fully vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong under the "vaccine bubble" concept. When the Government discusses travel arrangements with other countries or regions in the future, vaccination before travel will be a necessary requirement to ensure that citizens will have sufficient protection during travel.

Vaccination in lieu of regular testing

The vaccination in lieu of regular testing approach is being implemented for front-line government employees to safeguard their health. Front-line employees who have received the first dose of a vaccine and provided their vaccination record could be exempted from regular testing.

Arrangements for class resumption

The Education Bureau has been encouraging teachers and staff of schools to get vaccinated and encouraging schools to provide them with facilitation. The Education Bureau has also issued letters to encourage schools in Hong Kong to arrange vaccination leave for teachers and staff for receiving vaccination. When considering the resumption of full-day classes and other anti-epidemic measures in the future, the Government will consider the overall vaccine take-up rate of teachers and staff as well as students in each school and consider allowing more learning time and activities to resume.

Vaccination promotion activities

The Government welcomes the incentives actively provided by the commercial sector and organisations to encourage members of the public to receive COVID-19 vaccines. We understand that the commercial sector and many organisations are considering to organise lucky draw activities for this. In order to facilitate their applications for the relevant licence(s), the Government will expedite the processing of the relevant applications and assist in conducting verification, etc.

Last week in Hong Kong, a confirmed case with unknown source of infection involving the highly transmissible mutant strain emerged, sounding the alarm for the epidemic. The fifth wave of the epidemic could strike at any time and could possibly involve mutant strains with higher transmissibility and bringing greater threats. The two vaccines provided by the Government fulfil the criteria of safety, efficacy and quality. Only through the "Early Vaccination for All" campaign can Hong Kong build a barrier for protection with no delay.

Thank you, President.

Four pharmacies and one director convicted of supplying and possessing for sale surgical masks with false trade descriptions

Four pharmacies and the director of one of the pharmacies were convicted and fined \$4,500 to \$15,000 on June 7 and today (June 9) at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts and Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts respectively for supplying and possessing for sale surgical masks with false trade descriptions applied, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). Over 23 000 surgical masks involved in the case were also confiscated.

Hong Kong Customs received information in mid-last year alleging that a type of surgical mask being sold at a pharmacy was suspected to be bearing a false description of the distributor's address. A follow-up investigation confirmed that the description of the distributor's address was false. Customs took immediate action and seized the batch of surgical masks involved in the case at four pharmacies in Mong Kok and Tsuen Wan. Samples were also sent to a laboratory for examination. Test results revealed that the surgical masks failed to comply with the manufacturing standards as claimed and shown on the package boxes, in contravention of the TDO.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to purchase at reputable shops.

Under the TDO, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 is 100.4 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

[Fraudulent websites and phishing instant messages related to The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited relating to fraudulent websites and phishing instant messages, which has been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the websites concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.