

Measures to render further support to financial needy individuals and families to be implemented

The Government today (May 24) announced that a series of measures would be implemented to render further support to financial needy individuals and families.

The 2021-22 Budget announced that a one-off extra allowance, equal to half of one month of the standard rate of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payments, Old Age Allowance, Old Age Living Allowance or Disability Allowance, would be provided to eligible recipients of these social security payments. Similar arrangements will apply to recipients of Working Family Allowance (WFA) and the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS). The above recipients will receive the extra allowance starting from today (see details in the annex).

A Government spokesman said that recipients who were eligible for social security payments on April 28, 2021 (the date the Legislative Council approved the Appropriation Bill 2021), and those whose WFA/WITS applications were made in the period from October 1, 2020, to April 28, 2021, and eventually approved, would be eligible for the one-off extra allowance. It is estimated that about 1.51 million social security recipients, 70 000 WFA households and 20 000 WITS recipients would benefit from the arrangements, involving a total of over \$2.5 billion. The payment will be credited to the designated Hong Kong bank accounts of the eligible households/recipients without the need to make an application.

In addition, the Government will relax the eligibility criteria for the WFA Scheme and the Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects (STFASPs) starting from next month, for a period of one year.

Regarding the WFA Scheme, the working hour requirements for non-single-parent households will be reduced for the claim months from June 2021 to May 2022, viz substantially reducing that for Basic Allowance from 144 to 72 hours per month and reducing that for Medium Allowance from 168 to 132 hours per month, so that more low-income households will be eligible for WFA despite a decrease in their working hours, and some existing beneficiary households may receive a higher allowance. Taking an eligible four-person household with two children as an example, if its aggregate monthly working hours reach 72, it may receive a maximum of \$3,800 in WFA per month.

As for the STFASPs, the asset limits will also be relaxed from June 1, 2021, to May 31, 2022, by pitching them to those of the WFA Scheme. For example, the asset limit of a four-person household will be relaxed from \$264,000 to \$548,000, while that of a one-person household will be relaxed from \$99,000 to \$266,000.

For enquiries on social security and the STFASPs, please call the Social Welfare Department's hotline (2343 2255) or visit its website (www.swd.gov.hk). As for enquiries on the WFA and WITS Schemes, please call the hotline (2558 3000) of the Working Family Allowance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency or visit its website (www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/wfao).

[Speech by SCED at virtual event of StartmeupHK Festival 2021 \(English only\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a virtual event of the StartmeupHK Festival 2021, SHAPERZ – Shaping the Future of Work for SMEs, today (May 24):

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and a very warm welcome from Hong Kong to everyone joining us today wherever you are in the world. I'm honoured to welcome you to the opening of this year's StartmeupHK Festival, organised by InvestHK, which this year celebrates its sixth anniversary.

To state the obvious, the world has faced massive disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But with vaccines being rolled out across the world, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. This year's Festival focuses on looking forward towards the many exciting opportunities for start-ups to unlock, and puts a spotlight on the many strengths and benefits that Hong Kong offers for the start-up community.

Setting the tone for the exceptional events to come this week, it's my pleasure to introduce to you our first main event of the week, SHAPERZ, bringing you the latest technological innovations adopted by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), scale-ups and corporates that are shaping the future of work.

Technology has changed how we connect, consume and create in the workplace and caused a huge shift in the way businesses are run. The widespread adoption of automated tools featuring developments such as artificial intelligence, robotics, cloud computing and the Internet of Things has transformed manufacturing and industrial practices and the way we work.

Today's event showcases what the future of work will look like, and how businesses globally are thriving and adapting to meet the needs that the new normal demands of us. SHAPERZ aims to encourage SMEs to adopt the latest innovative technology that will help their business to grow, optimise their

costs, and, ultimately, be a driving force for our economic rebound.

In Hong Kong, the innovation and technology (I&T) space is going from strength to strength. The city has been a perfect testing ground and launchpad for start-ups, with everything a start-up needs: funding, markets, infrastructure, talent, a simple tax regime, and a business-friendly environment.

With the pandemic changing customer habits and impacting revenue, SMEs are increasingly looking to innovative products and services in a bid to market to customers, grow their sales, enhance customer service and streamline business operations. The event today will showcase some of the SME-friendly solutions available and share successful case studies to help this very important segment of the economy.

The Government has also rolled out a raft of support measures in its Anti-epidemic Fund to help companies leverage technology to improve their businesses. These include subsidies for early deployment of 5G, a lawtech fund, and a \$1.9 billion Distance Business Programme.

The Government has also set up a \$2 billion Innovation and Technology Venture Fund to co-invest in start-ups on a matching basis with selected private venture capital funds in Hong Kong. As part of a broader initiative, it has committed more than \$100 billion to promoting innovation and technology development, with a focus on eight key areas including increasing resources for research and development, pooling technology and talent, providing investment funding, and supplying I&T infrastructure.

What's more, for businesses that need funding, as one of the world's foremost international financial centres Hong Kong offers everything from trade finance and working capital through to green bonds, and of course listing opportunities on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

And these opportunities are evident. The number of start-ups in 2020 was up an impressive 51 per cent over 2017 at 3 360. What's more, 26 per cent of co-founders are from outside of Hong Kong, with the Mainland, USA, UK and Australia leading the way.

Beyond Hong Kong itself, the Greater Bay Area is a huge draw for foreign direct investment. With its focus on innovation and financial services, Hong Kong is in a unique position for collaboration opportunities. With a consumer market of 72 million and home to many of China's most innovative businesses, high-end manufacturing, research and development facilities and tech-savvy talent, it is just too big and vibrant to ignore.

In short, for businesses looking to tap into the Mainland China market or other markets in Asia, Hong Kong is a perfect launchpad with a strong track record for helping businesses to grow and succeed. We are very much open for business. We hope that you enjoy today's event and the rest of the StartmeupHK Festival this week. For those of you attending virtually from overseas, we look forward to seeing you in Hong Kong soon. Thank you.

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tai Kok Tsui and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice (with photo)

The Government yesterday (May 23) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 8pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tai Kok Tsui (i.e. Tower 6, Island Harbourview, 11 Hoi Fai Road, Tai Kok Tsui) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from May 3 to 23, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before May 25. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today (May 24) and carried out enforcement action in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the requirements of the relevant declaration and compulsory testing notice. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at around 9.30am today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Yau Tsim Mong District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Department of Health and the Auxiliary Medical Service mobilised around 250 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including soup packs, canned food, cup noodles, corn kernels and distilled water, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks, hand sanitiser and bleach were also provided to each person subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The Yau Tsim Mong District Office also set up a hotline for people

restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today, the Government took enforcement action in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wore a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 9.30am. Test records of around 380 persons subject to compulsory testing were checked. Nobody was found to have not undergone compulsory testing. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

The Government hopes that the around 40 households who have not answered the door will contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will 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 order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.



Employers and employees should take precautions against heat stroke

As the Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning, the Labour Department (LD) reminds employers and employees to take appropriate precautions to prevent heat stroke when working in a hot or humid environment.

Heat stroke could occur if an employee works in a hot or humid environment for prolonged periods of time, as the body may fail to regulate its temperature by effective heat dissipation through sweating.

The symptoms of heat-related illnesses include feeling thirsty, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle spasm or even mental confusion, and loss of consciousness or convulsion in severe cases.

Construction workers, cleaning workers, kitchen workers and porters, for example, are more prone to heat stroke as they may be working for long hours in such an environment, especially if appropriate preventive measures have not been taken.

The LD reminds employers to arrange for a suitable assessment of the risk of heat stress in the work environment and take appropriate preventive measures. The LD has produced two leaflets entitled "Checklist for Heat Stress Assessment at Construction Sites" and "Checklist for Heat Stress Assessment at Outdoor Cleansing Workplaces" respectively. Employers engaged in construction or outdoor cleaning work are advised to refer to these checklists in assessing the risk of heat stress at their workplaces. As for heat stress assessment at a workplace in general, employers can refer to a booklet entitled "Risk Assessment for the Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" produced by the LD.

The LD also reminds employers and employees to take the following

precautions to prevent heat stroke:

Employers

- (1) Take heed of the weather report and adopt shift work arrangements for employees to reduce their exposure to the hot environment, or arrange appropriate rest breaks for them during very hot periods;
- (2) Avoid working under direct sunlight and set up temporary sunshade wherever possible;
- (3) Provide cool potable water for employees at all times during work. If necessary, provide drinks containing electrolytes for employees to replenish loss of salt during profuse sweating;
- (4) Minimise physical demands by using tools or mechanical aids at work;
- (5) Increase air flow by enhancing ventilation or air-conditioning as appropriate;
- (6) Isolate heat-generating facilities at the workplace and use insulating materials to minimise heat dissipation to the other work areas; and
- (7) Provide relevant information and training for employees on heat stroke such as preventive measures and first aid treatment.

Employees

- (1) Wear clothing made of suitable materials (for example, cotton) that is loose-fitting and light-coloured to help heat dissipation, minimise heat absorption and allow sweat evaporation;
- (2) Wear a wide-brimmed hat when working outdoors;
- (3) Drink plenty of water or appropriate beverages with electrolytes to replenish the fluids and salt lost through sweating; and
- (4) Whenever there are any symptoms of heat-related illnesses, rest in a cool or shady place and drink water, and inform supervisors to take appropriate action immediately.

The LD also urges employers to provide for employees as far as practicable covered space with good ventilation for rest and meals. Furthermore, some employees may have difficulty in adapting to a hot working environment owing to their own health conditions. Employers should take this into account and consider the recommendations of their doctors when assigning work to these employees.

In addition to the publications on risk assessment, the LD has produced a leaflet entitled "Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work in a Hot Environment" for the public. The publications can be obtained free of charge from the offices of the Occupational Health Service of the LD, or downloaded from the department's webpage at www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_9.htm.

The LD organises occupational health talks in public places and at its own training venues regularly to raise employers' and employees' awareness of occupational health. Details of health talks on the prevention of heat stroke at work in a hot environment from May to July are as follows:

(A)

Dates: June 1, 10 and 25 (am)

May 24; June 4 and 16 (pm)

Time: Half-day

Venue: Occupational Safety and Health Training Centre of the Labour Department,
13/F, KOLOR·Tsuen Wan I, 68 Chung On Street, Tsuen Wan, New Territories

(B)

Dates: June 22

Time: Half-day (am)

Venue: Occupational Safety and Health Centre of the Labour Department,
G/F, Kwun Tong Community Health Centre Building, 60 Hip Wo Street, Kwun Tong
(MTR Kwun Tong Station Exit A1)

(C)

Date and Time: May 24 (2.30pm to 4pm)

June 4 (6.45pm to 8.15pm)

Venue: Lecture Theatre, Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road,
Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
(Opposite Victoria Park, MTR Tin Hau Station Exit B)

(D)

Date: July 15

Time: 3.30pm to 5pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road,
Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
(MTR Tsim Sha Tsui Station Exit E)

For enrolment or enquiries about these occupational health talks, please call 2852 4040 or 2361 8240 (for talks organised at the Occupational Safety and Health Centre). Moreover, the LD also provides an outreach health education service and occupational health nurses will, on invitation, disseminate occupational health information at workplaces at a convenient time. Please contact the nursing officer at 2852 4062 for details. All these health talks are free of charge.

Infection control measures taking into account the latest COVID-19 epidemic developments will be adopted at the venues. All the occupational health public talks must be pre-registered.

Government enforces “restriction-testing declaration” and compulsory

testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Tai Kok Tsui

The Government yesterday (May 23) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 8pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tai Kok Tsui (i.e. Tower 6, Island Harbourview, 11 Hoi Fai Road, Tai Kok Tsui) were 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. In addition, the Government had issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday to any person who had been present at the building for more than two hours from May 3 to 23, 2021, to undergo compulsory testing on or before May 25 even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect. The Government finished the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today (May 24) and is now carrying out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" to verify that all people in the "restricted area" have undergone compulsory testing. The Government will further announce the revocation time of the declaration.

Starting from around 7am today, persons in the "restricted area" in Tai Kok Tsui who have undergone testing and are able to present SMS notifications with negative test results or wear wristbands as proof of having undergone testing may leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer.

If a candidate of public examinations needs to leave the "restricted area" for the exam centre before the declaration is revoked, he/she can make a request to the prescribed officers in the "restricted area", regardless of whether the test result has been obtained or not. The prescribed officer may allow the candidate to leave the "restricted area" after verifying that the candidate has undergone testing as required and recording the relevant information of the candidate. Candidates who receive a negative test result on their way to the exam centres will be allowed to sit the exam as scheduled. For the safety of all candidates, only those candidates who have obtained negative results in the nucleic acid test will be allowed to enter the examination hall.

The Government set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" yesterday and requested persons subject to compulsory testing to collect combined nasal and throat swab samples at the stations to undergo a COVID-19 virus test before 12.30am today. As at 12.30am today, around 760 residents had undergone testing. No confirmed cases were found.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit around 280

households. Around 40 households did not answer the door. Those include some households with confirmed cases or those undergoing quarantine. Some units are possibly vacant as well. The Government does not have detailed information in this respect and will take measures to follow up.

The Government also understands that some residents already underwent testing at the mobile specimen collection stations set up in the district or by other means. Therefore, persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from May 21 to 23, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again.

The Government reiterates that enforcement actions will be taken seriously. Any person who fails to present an SMS notification with a test result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone testing breaches the compulsory testing notice and may be liable to a fine of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him/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 may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.