

Mobile specimen collection stations continue to provide COVID-19 testing service to public

Having reviewed the usage and public demand for the COVID-19 testing service, the Government has decided to extend the service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Beech Street, Tai Kok Tsui to April 4 (Sunday).

The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex. Persons of certain targeted groups (including employees of designated scheduled premises and catering businesses, construction site workers, school staff), persons subject to compulsory testing, as well as persons with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations (if service scope is applicable).

People whose test results are negative will be informed by SMS message through their mobile phones. Persons subject to compulsory testing must properly keep the relevant records. If any specimen tested shows a preliminarily positive COVID-19 result, the specimen will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the DH for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be followed up and announced by the CHP.

The Government reminds the public that they can undergo COVID-19 testing through various means. For details, 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 Government spokesman urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases) to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.

Government announces latest social distancing measures

The Government gazetted the amendments, directions and specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) to adjust the social distancing measures appropriately. The arrangement for religious activities will take effect today (March 31). The other social distancing measures will take effect tomorrow (April 1) for a period of 14 days till April 14 (Wednesday) (the specified period).

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, "Thanks to the efforts of the whole community in Hong Kong, the number of local confirmed cases has declined to less than five per day in average over the past week. To continue containing the spread of the disease, we need to maintain the majority of the social distancing measures and encourage more members of the public to get vaccinated as early as possible. As the Easter holiday is approaching, we will adjust the relevant restrictions for some activities with lower risks appropriately."

"We appeal to the public to remain patient, and continue to keep social distances during the Easter holiday, so that we could completely put off the fourth wave of the epidemic and achieve 'zero case' early. Furthermore, when the ratio of the vaccinated population reaches a higher level, it may be possible to have herd protection or immunity in the community, allowing the public to resume their normal life."

The details of the latest requirements and restrictions (see Annex 1 for requirements and restrictions under Cap. 599F) are as follows:

Catering business

(1) The existing requirements and restrictions applicable to catering business will be maintained during the specified period, including:

(a) Dedicated staff must be arranged in catering business premises for clearing used utensils and cleaning and disinfecting used tables and partitions. If this arrangement is not practicable, it must be ensured that the staff carrying out the aforementioned duties must adopt hand hygiene measures before switching to perform other duties, and should adopt hand hygiene measures as necessary during each round of cleaning-up duties. Hand hygiene measures include using alcohol-based hand sanitisers, washing hands or changing gloves.

(b) If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business adopts specified infection control measures (including ensuring that users (excluding persons who only order takeaways) scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code

using the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application on their mobile phones or register their names, contact numbers and the dates and times of their visits before the persons are allowed to enter the premises; and arranging for all staff involved in the operation of the premises to undergo a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19 once every 14 days), the catering premises can provide dine-in services from 5am to 9.59pm every day, with the number of customers at the catering premises at any one time not exceeding 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity of the premises and no more than four persons seated together at one table. The Government is exploring that staff of catering business premises who have completed vaccination (i.e. 14 days after receiving the second vaccine dose) would be deemed as having fulfilled the aforementioned regular testing requirement. Details will be announced in due course;

(c) If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business does not adopt the specified infection control measures, the catering premises can only provide dine-in services from 5am to 5.59pm every day, with the number of customers at the catering premises at any one time not exceeding 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity of the premises and no more than two persons seated together at one table;

(d) Bars or pubs will continue to be closed;

(e) No live performance, dancing activity, karaoke or mahjong-tin kau activity is allowed in catering premises;

(f) The number of persons participating in any one banquet at any one time may not exceed 20 persons;

(g) Catering business premises should comply with specified requirements on air change or air purifier(s) by April 30; and

(h) Other requirements and restrictions, including that all persons must wear masks at any time in the premises except when eating or drinking, body temperature screening on persons before entering the premises and providing hand sanitisers, etc.

Scheduled premises

(2) Swimming pools can be opened when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled, which include:

(a) Any person must wear a mask at all times (including when a coach is coaching) within any swimming pool except when the person is swimming, having a shower, walking from a changing room to a pool or vice versa, walking from a pool to another pool, or doing warm-up exercise with adequate distance or effective partition between persons;

(b) The number of persons to be allowed at any one time must not exceed 30 per cent of the designed capacity of the swimming pool;

(c) Except when doing team sports, each training group or class must consist

of no more than four persons including the coach, and there must be at least 1.5 metres between each four-person training group or class ;

(d) Carry out regular environmental cleaning and disinfection on the facilities at least daily;

(e) The ratio of free residual chlorine content of the pool water must meet the standard. A set of water testing kit must be provided, and the pool water must be tested at least once per day for its free residual chlorine content and the record of the test results must be kept;

(f) Leisure pool, children's pool, toddlers' pool and Jacuzzi (if available) must remain closed;

(g) Other requirements and restrictions, for example arranging for all staff involved in the operation of the premises to undergo a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19 once every 14 days, etc.

(3) For cinemas and places of public entertainment with live performance, tickets to be sold and seats to be occupied of each house for film screening/each place with live performance must not exceed 75 per cent of the seating capacity of the house/place; the total number of visitors in a theme park must not at any one time exceed 75 per cent of the overall capacity of the theme park.

(4) Seats to be occupied must not exceed 75 per cent of the seating capacity of the spectator stands of sports premises and swimming pools.

(5) Apart from the above major adjustments, during the specified period, most of the existing requirements and restrictions applicable to the scheduled premises under Cap. 599F will be maintained. Some scheduled premises can be opened when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled (including arranging for all staff involved in the operation of the premises to undergo a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19 once every 14 days). The Government is exploring that staff of scheduled premises who have completed vaccination (i.e. 14 days after receiving the second vaccine dose) would be deemed as having fulfilled the aforementioned regular testing requirement. Details will be announced in due course.

(6) Following scheduled premises under Cap. 599F will continue to be closed:

(a) bathhouses;

(b) premises (commonly known as party rooms) that are maintained or intended to be maintained for hire for holding social gatherings;

(c) establishments (commonly known as clubs or nightclubs) that are open late into the night, usually for drinking, and dancing or other entertainment;

(d) karaoke establishments; and

(e) mahjong-tin kau premises.

Persons responsible for carrying on catering businesses and managers of scheduled premises that contravene the statutory requirements under Cap. 599F would have committed a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum

fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Group gathering

(7) The scope of existing exempted group gatherings under Cap.599G (at Annex 2) will be adjusted to cover religious gatherings during which no food or drink is served (except food or drink as part of a religious ritual). The relevant arrangement will take effect on March 31 (Wednesday).

(8) Unless exempted, the prohibition on group gatherings of more than four persons in public places will continue during the specified period. The requirement is also applicable to group gatherings in catering business and scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F in which the relevant requirements or restrictions are not complied with.

Any person who participates in a prohibited group gathering; organises a prohibited group gathering; owns, controls or operates the place of such a gathering; and knowingly allows the taking place of such a gathering commits an offence under Cap. 599G. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who participate in a prohibited group gathering may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000.

Mask-wearing requirement

(9) The mandatory mask-wearing requirement under Cap. 599I will be extended during the specified period. During the aforementioned period, a person must wear a mask at all times when the person is boarding or on board a public transport carrier, is entering or present in an MTR paid area, or is entering or present in a specified public place (i.e. all public places, save for outdoor public places in country parks and special areas as defined in section 2 of the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208)).

Under Cap. 599I, if a person does not wear a mask in accordance with the requirement, an authorised person may deny that person from boarding a public transport carrier or entering the area concerned, as well as require that person to wear a mask and disembark from the carrier or leave the said area. A person in contravention of the relevant provision commits an offence and the maximum penalty is a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). In addition, authorised public officers may issue fixed penalty notices to persons who do not wear a mask in accordance with the requirement and such persons may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000.

[Transcript of remarks of press](#)

conference

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference this afternoon (March 30) on the approval by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the amended Annex I to the Basic Law on Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Annex II to the Basic Law on Method for the Formation of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and its Voting Procedures. Also joining were the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai; and the Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Roy Tang. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference.

Reporter: The first question, is it appropriate to let national security police have a say on who can stand in elections and make a decision on local politics, and is the power given above their duties as law enforcement? The new vetting body and the national security commission comprise the CE and senior government officials, would there be a conflict of interest involved as the current CE, you yourself, can basically decide who can run in the next CE election and possibly as your opponent, and who will be voting in the CE election as well? Second question, will the candidate qualification process filled with hurdles and screening and the directly elected seats in all bodies kind of significantly reduced? Critics have been asking, why not just do appointments instead of elections? How will you answer to that? Thank you

Chief Executive: The first question, let me repeat it again and read out what is in the National Security Law – in the National Security Law that was enacted on June 30 last year and implemented in Hong Kong, it has Article 17, which specifies the duties and functions of the Department for Safeguarding National Security of the Hong Kong Police Force. It does include very categorically to conduct national security review. It is the function of the Hong Kong Police Force, they are only conducting review, they are doing the fact finding, and then present the facts to the committee that I chair, that is the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Hong Kong SAR. The decision of whether a candidate, based on the findings, could fulfil or meet the statutory requirements of swearing allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR and upholding the Basic Law is not one for the Hong Kong Police Force. It is one for this committee, and by the way the English translation of this committee is the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee. That is point number one. And it is only right because you need resources, you need to build up that expertise on how to find the facts. It is not something that you and I can do. The Police has been given this responsibility under the National Security Law, it is only right that they will discharge this duty as required under the National Security Law.

The second question is about conflict of interest. First of all, this committee is comprised of not one single individual, but several Principal Officials. Although I said that if they are disqualifying candidates on the basis of national security, then they could not disclose why, that is the

details, and the decision is not subject to judicial review. But it is all in the public domain for people to see whether a particular person has been disqualified. I don't think that the mere fact that the Chief Executive is the chairman of the national security committee will be able to singlehandedly decide who is eligible, who is not eligible. The public has all to judge whether a decision has been made rightly or wrongly because for somebody to compete or contest in a CE election, it could not be somebody who is totally unknown. I'm sure that society will be able to judge how could this candidate be disqualified. There must be expression of opinion if that sort of thing happened just because of an incumbent Chief Executive trying to interfere with the decision of the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee.

The third question is a very broad one, about how one should look at this set of improvements to the electoral system of Hong Kong, or how one could justify this set of improvements to the people of Hong Kong. That brings me back to the question of democracy. How one should judge democracy? What is the best system of democracy? I am one of those who will not subscribe to a view that there is only one single model of democracy in this world. There's no one size that fits all. If you want to look at which is optimal democratic process or development in a place, then you have to look at several factors. One is the constitutional status of this place, whether it is a country, whether it is a federal state, whether it is a special administrative region that is a district administration like Hong Kong. Secondly is the actual circumstances, the pace of development and so on. In our case, since 1997, we have several rounds of elections and I may as well say this very categorically that the Central Government is very sincere to give Hong Kong people so-called more democracy that is universal suffrage. On three occasions, since 1997, the National People's Congress Standing Committee has passed decisions or interpretations to allow us to move forward. But who has jeopardised those improvements? I'm sure you have an answer. As lately as the last one, which was conducted by me as a team leader, I was very convinced then, I am very convinced now that that is a very good package that will enable Hong Kong people to choose the Chief Executive by "one person, one vote". But that was vetoed by the so-called "pro-democracy" members in the Legislative Council. We could not blame the Central Government, we could not blame the Hong Kong SAR Government. What we have seen since around 2014, maybe "Occupy Central", then we have the Mong Kok riot, we have the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, then all these riots, and then we have the "35-plus" and all these things that get people very worried what will happen if we do not plug the loopholes in the Hong Kong electoral system. It is for that reason that this set of improvements has to be put in place in order to ensure that Hong Kong's electoral system is in line with "One Country, Two Systems". It will not return candidates who become politicians or who become part of the governing team that will endanger national security and do not mind destroying Hong Kong. That has been a slogan, adopted by the so-called "pro-democracy" camp, they don't mind to destroy Hong Kong as long as they seize the majority in the Legislative Council and force the Chief Executive to resign, then force the Central Government to step in and then riots and bloodshed. These are all writings that have been expressed by somebody who wanted to destroy Hong Kong. It's not created out of the blue by myself.

It is with that sort of chaotic and dangerous situation that the Central Government has no option but first to enact the National Security Law and then now to improve the electoral system. But, the ultimate purpose of universal suffrage is still there. It has not been changed. Article 45 and Article 68 of the Basic Law that provide for universal suffrage as an ultimate goal for Hong Kong have not changed. Not a single word has changed. What will happen is as we move ahead with the current set of improvements in place, then in accordance with Hong Kong's actual situation, and in an orderly and gradual manner, and meeting the requirements in Article 45, I'm quite certain that we will still have universal suffrage in selecting the Chief Executive. We just need to act in concert and make sure that we are not moving away from this very fundamental concept of "One Country, Two Systems". Thank you.

Reporter: Hi, Mrs Lam. You said you won't be doing the vetting yourself, but how can you expect your Principal Officials to be doing their jobs without fear or favour when they are vetting their boss or their future boss? And how will you choose the convener of the Election Committee? The document says that it will be taken up by someone in an office of state leadership. Does it just leave two of your predecessors in your current job to take up that post? And, again, is there a conflict of interest if you would have a role in picking the convener of that very important Election Committee? Secondly you've said that you want the future elections to represent all sectors of society. Why then have you booted out all District Councillors from the Election Committee, which is by definition the most representative because it was done by universal suffrage, whether it was in a federal or unitary system, and replaced them with Fire Safety Committees and District Fire Crime Committees that very few people in Hong Kong have heard of? And just now you said that Beijing has tried to give Hong Kong more democracy back in 2014. Is it still an intention to bring that proposal back? And is that the next step you will take or is that off your table? Thank you.

Chief Executive: There are four questions. I'll try to answer them. By the way, I do have a bit of time so you can continue to ask. I'll continue to answer your questions because this is such an important subject. As far as the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee, it will be made up of Principal Officials, several Principal Officials. Your worry is about fear or favour and conflict of interest. I'm telling you that, especially talking about the Chief Executive, the Chief Executive candidate will not be a nobody in Hong Kong. Whatever committee, whatever Principal Officials, it is not up to them to arbitrarily decide that a CE candidate does not fulfil the requirements of swearing allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR and upholding the Basic Law. I have to say that that sort of worries are exaggerated.

The second point is about the convener. The convener is not appointed by me. The convener has been specified in Annex I as whoever in the 1 500-strong Election Committee who is assuming duties of a state leader or who is performing state leadership duties. I take it to mean it will be the Vice-Chairman of the CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference), but I could not tell you which one because it's not specified and it's not

for me to say. I want to assure you that this is a clause for use under very, very exceptional and rare situations, and this convener system will only kick in during elections. During normal periods of governance, this convener system or the chief convener has absolutely no role in the governance of the Hong Kong SAR. It certainly will not have any influence over the Chief Executive or the Principal Officials. It is really under very exceptional circumstances during the course of an election that something that is totally unforeseeable has happened, that it needs a plan to tackle, then the Central Government may trigger this convener system. But prior to that I will draw your attention to another paragraph in Article 8 in the March 11 Decision of the NPC (National People's Congress). It says that the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR shall submit in a timely manner to the Central People's Government (CPG) reports on the arrangements for the electoral system and the organisation of elections in the Hong Kong SAR, and other relevant important matters. I would imagine, because if I were the then CE, with this Article 8, if something very exceptional happens in an election, the first thing that will happen is the CE will submit a report to the CPG saying that something very unusual, very exceptional, has happened during an election, then the CPG will consider what action to take. The fact that there is a chief convener within the 1 500 members may be a ready way that something, some action, could be taken. I'm only explaining to you that there is a role of the Chief Executive in the process. But I'm not appointing anyone so it has nothing to do with me, and it will not appear in the local legislation. While I said that the local legislation will need to reflect what is in Annex I and Annex II, this is the thing or the provision that will not appear in Hong Kong SAR electoral laws.

The third is about District Councils. Actually we've got a very detailed answer in this booklet on why District Councils are excluded. District Councils, by definition under Article 97 of the Basic Law, are not supposed to be organs of political power. They are advisory bodies to tender advice to the Government on district matters. They don't even have an executive duty, they don't even exist as a legal entity to pay money to somebody and so on. They are advisory bodies. But over the years, especially after the last election, we have seen this huge politicisation of the District Councils that they've become sort of also organs of political power, trying to influence the political system in Hong Kong and also to use the platforms to do anti-China, anti-government measures and so on. The exclusion of the District Councils is to restore them back to their intended constitutional role, that is they are not organs of political power, they are only advisory bodies to give advice to the Government on various district matters. Having said that, the Central People's Government realised if we are to achieve this broad representation in the Election Committee, and to have balanced participation by more sectors in the population, then we need to find other candidates or other sub-sectors which are able to reflect the district views and also to provide a grass-roots perspective to governance. In the 1 500 members, as you have found it out, there are several sub-sectors which will fulfil this role very nicely. For example, in the 18 districts, each district will have an Area Committee, each district will have a District Fight Crime Committee, and each district will have a District Fire Safety Committee. If you look back at the history, some of these committees existed well before the District

Council, for example DFCC, the District Fight Crime Committee, because in those days safety was paramount. The DFCC actually dated back to 1973. And then the Area Committee, 1972, well before we have District Councils. They are really very ready groups or sub-sectors that could fill this role of reflecting these grass-roots or district views to the Election Committee and to the overall governance in Hong Kong. On top of that, there are still others called the grass-root associations, there are also those called clansmen association. They bring together a very wide spectrum of ordinary people who are able to participate in this Election Committee. I think that is an improvement over the existing system, where because of the loophole in the election system you could have 80 per cent of District Council members coming from one single stance, which is not a balanced representation at all.

The final question is about universal suffrage. As I said, Article 45 and Article 68, that is the ultimate goal of achieving universal suffrage respectively for the selection of the Chief Executive and the formation of the Legislative Council, remain intact – not a single word has been changed. When the actual situation permits, which is written in the two Articles, in a gradual and an orderly manner and in accordance with Article 45, that is the CE has to be nominated by a broadly representative nominating committee, when those conditions are fulfilled, I do not see why we will not move ahead and gradually move towards the ultimate goal of universal suffrage. But it will not happen within my term. We don't have time to allow the system to evolve and establish and mature in order to attain that objective. Thank you.

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

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme statistics](#)

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for the 33rd day since February 26, 2021.

So far, about 490 200 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered for members of the public (please see Annex 1). Among them, about 455 900 persons have received their first dose, with about 304 600 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 151 300 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine. About 34 300 persons have received their second dose of the Sinovac vaccine.

In the last 24 hours ending at 8pm today (March 30), the following vaccination and booking figures were recorded:

(i) About 5 400 persons received their first dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 3 500 persons vaccinated at eight Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) and about 1 900 persons at private doctors and clinics

participating in the programme;

(ii) about 9 700 persons received their second dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 5 300 persons vaccinated at the CVCs and about 4 400 persons at private doctors and clinics;

(iii) the overall percentage of people who have received the Sinovac vaccine at the eight CVCs is about 94 per cent; and

(iv) about 3 500 persons have made online bookings for receiving their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine.

In the last 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were four cases of ambulance transfers to hospitals. Among them, three persons were discharged and one was admitted for observation (please see Annex 2).

As background information, in the last 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were 50 cases of stroke or myocardial infarction that required admission to the Intensive Care Unit, Acute Stroke Unit and Cardiac Care Unit of public hospitals. The state of new cases admitted to the wards concerned is provided as a cross reference to enhance fuller public understanding of cases of the kind recorded on vaccine recipients.

[Patient Management Workflow Enhanced for Mutant Strains](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) will further step up the testing of COVID-19 for Variant of Concern (VOC) following the clinical finding of identifying one case of mutant strain with negative result for N501Y while positive for E484K mutation.

"A 28-year-old male patient returned from the United States of America was first admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital and later North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre (HKICC) on March 27 for single isolation pending the results of the confirmatory test and gene sequencing," the HA spokesperson said.

"Upon notification by the Public Health Laboratory Centre of the Department of Health that the result for N501Y was negative, the patient was arranged for cohort isolation with three other confirmed patients in HKICC from March 28 afternoon, according to prevailing practice."

The HA received notification last evening that further sequencing test identified E484K mutation in the specimen of this patient.

"In previous available clinical findings, specimens being screened negative for N501Y, a typical mutation strain originated from the United Kingdom, are able to screen out the N501 Y.V2 and P.1 Variant which were first reported in South Africa in August 2020 and Japan/Brazil in December 2020."

As a precautionary measure, HKICC has arranged single isolation each for the index patient and the three patients since 1.00am today.

"HKICC will continue to closely monitor the condition of the four patients and communicate with the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) on the isolation and quarantine requirements for these patients."

â€‹The spokesperson added that no VOC have been identified in any local cases so far. The HA will deliberate further with the CHP and relevant experts on enhancing the workflow of the gene sequencing tests and the subsequent patient isolation arrangement.