

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

Clarification on tax system and improving electoral system

In response to media enquiries on an article by the Financial Times today (March 22) carrying an interview with the Chief Secretary for Administration, a Government spokesman reiterated that with a low and simple tax regime, Hong Kong maintained a high level of transparency in taxation policy and would continue to do so.

The spokesman stressed, "Hong Kong's economic success has been built on a thriving market economy and a small government underpinned by a simple, transparent and low tax regime. Businesses and individuals in Hong Kong enjoy one of the most competitive tax systems in the world."

"On the other hand, Hong Kong has always been a staunch supporter of international efforts to enhance tax transparency and combat tax evasion and money laundering."

"Since 2018 we have implemented the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ("OECD")'s minimum standards against Base Erosion and Profit Shifting ("BEPS"), and conducted Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information in Tax Matters ("AEOI") with the relevant jurisdictions," the spokesman said.

"These efforts underline the importance we attach to Hong Kong's commitments as an international financial centre. Hong Kong will continue to make sustained efforts to comply with new international tax requirements according to the international consensus, including the implementation of the global minimum tax proposal to be promulgated by the OECD to address the tax challenges arising from digitalisation of economy."

On the National People's Congress' decision on improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the spokesman reiterated that the HKSAR Government will fully and resolutely implement "One Country, Two Systems", administer Hong Kong according to the rule of law, safeguard the HKSAR's constitutional order as defined under the Constitution and the Basic Law, safeguard the Country's sovereignty, security and development interests, and ensure the overall stability of Hong Kong.

"Under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, issues such as housing, land and the wealth gap that concern the wellbeing of many sectors of the Hong Kong community are squarely within the HKSAR's high degree of autonomy.

"The Chief Secretary for Administration did not say that the HKSAR Government was 'instructed' by the Central People's Government to focus on such areas as wrongly stated in the article," the spokesman stressed.

On the oath-taking of judges and civil servants, the spokesman pointed out that all judges are required to take judicial oaths on assumption of office in accordance with Article 104 of the Basic Law and the Oaths and Declarations Ordinance (Cap. 11).

The spokesman stressed that the contents of both the judicial oath and the oath/declaration by civil servants similarly require the person taking oath/making declaration to uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The oath taking does not intend to "crack down" or to "purge" any civil servant.

The spokesman pointed out that according to Annex I to the Basic Law, the Chief Executive shall be elected by a broadly representative Election Committee in accordance with the Basic Law and appointed by the Central People's Government, and not "appointed by an election committee" as wrongly stated in the article.

Statistics for COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for 25 days since February 26.

In the past 24 hours ending at 8pm today (March 22), the following figures were recorded:

(i) About 10 200 persons received their first dose of Sinovac vaccine, including about 7 200 persons vaccinated at eight Community Vaccination

Centres (CVCs) and about 2 900 persons at private doctors and clinics participating in the programme; and

(ii) About 15 000 persons received their first dose of BioNTech vaccine at 19 CVCs.

(iii) A total of about 25 200 persons received their first dose of vaccine.

The overall percentage of people who have received Sinovac vaccine at eight CVCs today is about 80 per cent, while the overall percentage of people who have received BioNTech vaccine at 19 CVCs today is about 95 per cent.

So far, a cumulative total of about 379 600 persons have received their first vaccination dose (Annex 1), with about 243 800 persons receiving Sinovac vaccine and about 135 800 persons receiving BioNTech vaccine.

As of 8pm today, about 5 900 persons had reserved their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine online in the past 24 hours, while about 12 100 persons had reserved their first and second doses of the BioNTech vaccine online.

In the past 24 hours ending at 0000 hours today, there were 12 cases of ambulance transfer to hospital. Among them, six persons were discharged, three persons were admitted for observation and three persons were discharged against medical advice (Annex 2).

Meanwhile, as background information, in the past 24 hours ending at 0000 hours today, there were 43 cases of stroke or myocardial infarction that required admission to Intensive Care Unit, Acute Stroke Unit and Cardiac Care Unit in public hospitals. This figure is the actual total number of new cases admitted to concerned wards due to stroke or myocardial infarction and serves as a cross reference for the general public to comprehend the unwell cases.

New CVC to accept booking

A new CVC at the Queen Elizabeth Stadium will commence operation on March 29, bringing the number of CVCs administering BioNTech vaccine to 20. People belonging to the priority groups can book receiving BioNTech vaccine there through the online booking system on the designated website of the Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk) from 9am tomorrow (March 23). Regarding the vaccination of Sinovac vaccine, people can make reservations for receiving the vaccine at eight CVCs and the 18 general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority. They can also make appointments for vaccination with private doctors or clinics participating in the programme.

Government to gazette compulsory testing notice

The Government will exercise the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publish in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at seven specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

Currently, in all districts in Hong Kong, if one or more new confirmed cases are found in the residential buildings (including buildings for both commercial and residential uses), or there are sewage samples tested positive which implied possible infection risks, the buildings will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

For testing targeting at workplaces, if one or more confirmed cases are found in a workplace, it will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

Six premises fulfilling the above criteria will be included in the compulsory testing notice today (March 22). In addition, since there was outbreak of influenza-like illness (ILI) in Cannan Kindergarten (Waterloo Road) / Cannan Nursery (Waterloo Road), 111 Waterloo Road, Kowloon Tong, and the symptoms of ILI are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the school is also covered in the compulsory testing notice.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are as follows:

1. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part A of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 9 to March 22, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by March 24, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 20 and March 22, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.
2. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part B of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 9 to March 22, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and visitors), have to undergo testing by March 24, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 20 and March 22, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.
3. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part C of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 9 to March 22, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff, students and visitors), have to undergo testing by March 24, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing choose to undergo testing

using the specimen bottles distributed by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), they have to return the specimen bottle with the sample by March 26, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 20 and March 22, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau reminds the public that in accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person who is placed under quarantine pursuant to section 22 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (person under quarantine) in the same residential unit on the date of commencement of quarantine or during the 14 days before that day, and who becomes aware of the quarantine of the person under quarantine when the relevant quarantine has not yet been completed, have to undergo testing within two days of he/she becoming aware of the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (at 6275 6901), fax (at 2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test.

The Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations at Siu Sai Wan Estate in Eastern District and Scenic View in Ngau Chi Wan tomorrow (March 23) for residents and workers subject to compulsory testing. 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 2. 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.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the community testing centres (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/);
3. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 121 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);
4. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority;
5. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the Department of Health (DH) and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf); or
6. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by

the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

The spokesman cautioned that testing received at accident and emergency departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notice.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notification containing result of the test for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the community testing centres, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the community testing centres are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. 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 order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purpose as necessary. The

workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Government 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."

[Global Positioning System tracker pilot scheme does not affect cattle's health and welfare](#)

In response to concerns of some media regarding the situation of a cattle wearing a Global Positioning System (GPS) tracker for a pilot scheme, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (March 22) said that no adverse effects on the cattle's health and life had been found after continual surveillance. –

"The pilot scheme is a joint effort between the AFCD and Electrical and Mechanical Services Department by using of Internet of Things (IoT) technology to detect the location of the cattle in suburban areas. The scheme aims to help the AFCD to conduct a survey on the population and distribution of cattle and understand their movement patterns and places of stay so as to formulate relevant measures to reduce cattle related traffic accidents and safeguard the safety and welfare of cattle," the spokesman said.

Under the pilot scheme, a collar with GPS tracker has been attached to a cattle living in the Sai Kung Country Park area. The cattle tried on the collar in an operation centre of the AFCD for a certain period of time for it to get used to the device before returning it to the country park.

An expert and a veterinarian of the City University of Hong Kong noted that tracking animal movements with a GPS tracking collar helps provide useful data for studying animals, and is also a common practice in other countries for animal behaviour research. They also agreed that the collar has been fitted appropriately, leaving enough room for the cattle to eat and regurgitate, without affecting its normal life.

The spokesman for the AFCD added that the tracking collar makes use of IoT communication technology, which is low in battery consumption, and thus fit for use in long-term surveillance of animals in the wilderness. Regarding the application of animal microchips, the spokesman said the microchips currently used on animals cannot send out any GPS signal.

Regarding the concerns on the weight and size of the tracking collars, the spokesman said, "The weight of the tracking collar is not heavy for an adult cattle. Therefore it will not affect its normal live. The common pet tracking collars, which are smaller and lighter, do not have large battery capacity, so it is not good enough for related wild animal research."

AFCD staff will keep regular inspection of the cattle and its tracking collar in Sai Kung Country Park to ensure that the cattle's health remains unaffected and the collar works properly. The AFCD will complete data collection as soon as possible, and then remove the tracking collar from the cattle.