

Government enforces "restriction-testing declaration" and compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Tseung Kwan O

The Government yesterday (March 19) 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 Tseung Kwan O (i.e. Tower 9, La Splendeur, LOHAS Park, 1 Lohas Park Road, Tseung Kwan O) are 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 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 March 6 to 19, 2021, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 21 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 7.30am today (March 20) 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 7.30am today, persons in the "restricted area" in Tseung Kwan O who have undergone testing and are able to present SMS notifications with negative test results as proof of having undergone testing may leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer.

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 2am today. As at 2am today, 1 235 residents had undergone testing. The test results of a small number of specimens are still pending.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit around 450 households, around 60 households did not answer the door. Those include some households with confirmed case or 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 March 17 to 19, 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 negative 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.

Territory-wide flag day today

The Association of Evangelical Free Churches of Hong Kong has been issued a Public Subscription Permit to hold a territory-wide flag sale from 7am to 12.30pm today (March 20), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities, including any updated information, covered by the issued Public Subscription Permit have been published on the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search). Permits for flag days containing information on contact methods of the flag-selling organisations and the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_controlofc/sub_flagdays) for reference. For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678.

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

FHB requests testing service provider to take serious follow-up on data

input error

During regular data checking of COVID-19 testing system on March 18, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) detected some human errors committed by a testing service provider during uploading of negative test results. As a result, the system was unable to notify citizens of the negative testing results through SMS messages on mobile phones. The incident involved some 2 800 deep throat saliva specimens submitted to the Hospital Authority or the Department of Health for testing between February 28 and March 2. No positive cases were involved.

The concerned testing service provider is BGI. It is understood that testing of the concerned specimens have completed in early March and all specimens were tested negative. However, concerned staff made an error when inputting the dates, and the system was thus unable to issue testing result via SMS messages to relevant persons timely.

The FHB has requested the testing service provider to review the test results and rectify the registration information. Affected persons may receive SMS messages containing the result of earlier test automatically sent out by the system. The incident did not affect the accuracy or validity of the test, and it did not involve any loss of personal data. The FHB extended apologies to those affected for any inconvenience caused.

This incident of data input error is the second similar one encountered by BGI recently. The FHB finds it extremely undesirable and has issued a warning letter to instruct BGI to investigate the incident seriously, and to expedite the implementation of relevant improvement measures. If the situation does not improve within a short time, the FHB will take further follow-up actions in accordance with contract terms. The FHB is also reviewing the design of the computer system and discussing with various testing service providers on proposals to step up preventive measures in order to avoid any chance of incorrect data input.

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice and specifications under Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain

Persons) Regulation

The Government exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and gazetted a compulsory testing notice and specifications, which require any person who had been present at nine specified premises and persons who had been engaged to work at fitness centres during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test, and continue to empower a registered medical practitioner to require any person whom he clinically suspects has contracted COVID-19 to undergo a test during a period of 14 days from March 20 to April 2, 2021.

Compulsory testing notice

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.

Seven premises fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notice today (March 19). Among them, since a few cases were found at different floors of One Island East, 18 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, the whole building was covered in the compulsory testing notice. In addition, since there were outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) in Sham Shui Po Baptist Church Kindergarten, 1/F, 4 Kwong Lee Road, Sham Shui Po and St. Catherine's International Kindergarten, 4-6 Norfolk Road, Kowloon Tong, and the symptoms of URTI are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the schools were also covered in the compulsory testing notice.

To target the cluster outbreak in relation to fitness centres, further to the compulsory testing requirements on March 12, all persons who had been engaged to work or had been on duty at any fitness centre in Hong Kong at any time during the specified period have to undergo second compulsory testing, in order to break the transmission chain in the community early.

The Government encourages persons subject to compulsory testing to utilise the testing services of the community testing centres across the territory. Furthermore, more mobile specimen collection stations will be set up in various districts. Persons subject to compulsory testing including staff of fitness centres can receive free testing in community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations.

Details of the compulsory testing notices 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 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by March 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 17 and March 19, 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 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and visitors), have to undergo testing by March 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 17 and March 19, 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 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff, students and visitors), have to undergo testing by March 22, 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 24, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 17 and March 19, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.
4. Any person who had been engaged to work or had been on duty at any fitness centre in Hong Kong defined under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) at any time during the period from March 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff), have to undergo testing by March 21, 2021.

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 the following locations tomorrow (March 20). Please see Annex 2 for details of service scope.

- South Horizons, Ap Lei Chau
- Berkshire House and Oxford House, Quarry Bay
- Ping Tin Estate, Lam Tin
- Tin Fu Court, Tin Shui Wai

Starting from tomorrow (March 20), the mobile specimen collection station at Beech Street, Tai Kok Tsui will be relocated to 557 Shanghai Street, Mong Kok (opposite to Langham Place) and will be open until March 21 (Sunday) tentatively. The service period of the mobile specimen collection stations at Wong Chuk Hang Recreation Ground, Wong Tai Sin Square, Sha Tsui Road Playground in Tsuen Wan, Plaza of Sha Tin Town Hall, Tai Po Community Centre, On Hing Playground in Yuen Long, Tin Shui Sports Centre in Tin Shui Wai and Kin Sang Community Hall in Tuen Mun will be extended to March 28 (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 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 who had been engaged to work or had been on duty at any fitness centre can receive free testing at any mobile specimen collection stations which serve "local residents and workers subject to compulsory testing", "staff of catering premises and designated scheduled premises under Cap. 599F" or "general public".

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/.

Relevant specifications for compulsory testing for persons clinically suspected to have contracted COVID-19

According to expert advice, compulsory testing for symptomatic patients can effectively slow down the transmission of the virus by early identification, early isolation and early treatment. To keep the epidemic situation under control, the Government considers it necessary to continue to solicit help from medical practitioners in identifying possibly infected persons as soon as possible.

During the period of 14 days from March 20 to April 2, 2021, registered medical practitioners may, by a written direction, require a person whom the medical practitioner attends to in the course of professional practice and clinically suspects to have contracted COVID-19 to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test. Persons who receive the written direction (persons who are subject to testing under written directions) should undergo a test within two days after the issue date of the written direction (the testing deadline).

Persons who are subject to testing under written directions may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

(1) To use the specimen bottle provided by the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction to collect a deep throat saliva specimen and submit the specimen bottle to designated specimen collection points by the testing deadline (see the specimen collection points and time at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html). Having reported the case to the DH, the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction will be notified of the test result; or

(2) To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories recognised by the DH (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf) by the testing deadline and submit the test result to the medical practitioner who issued the written direction or his clinic staff by electronic mail, fax, or by hardcopy within four days after the testing deadline.

For example, if the written direction is issued on Monday, the person subject to testing under the written direction should undergo a test via one of the above options on or before Wednesday, the testing deadline. If the test result of the specimen is preliminary positive, 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 Centre for Health Protection of the DH.

"Persons who are subject to testing under written directions are suspected to be infected and should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres for testing. To reduce transmission risk, relevant persons who underwent testing are advised to stay at home and avoid going out when waiting for test results."

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."

Statistics for COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for 22 days since February 26.

In the past 24 hours ending at 8pm today (March 19), the following figures were recorded:

(i) About 11 800 persons received their first dose of Sinovac vaccine, including about 8 200 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 15 700 persons received their first dose of BioNTech vaccine at 19 CVCs.

(iii) A total of about 27 500 persons received their first dose of vaccine.

The overall percentage of people who have received Sinovac vaccine at eight CVCs today is about 84 per cent, while the overall percentage of people who have received BioNTech vaccine at 19 CVCs today is about 96 per cent.

So far, a cumulative total of about 304 100 persons have received their first vaccination dose (Annex 1), with about 213 300 persons receiving Sinovac vaccine and about 90 800 persons receiving BioNTech vaccine.

As of 8pm today, about 8 000 persons had reserved their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine online in the past 24 hours, while about 17 200 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, 10 cases were discharged and two cases were admitted for observation (Annex 2).

Meanwhile, as background information, in the past 24 hours ending at 0000 hours today, there were 39 cases of stroke or acute myocardial infarction that required admission to Hospital Authority's Intensive Care

Unit/Acute Stroke Unit/Cardiac Care Unit.