

Booking statistics for COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme started accepting online bookings today (February 23) for members of the public to get vaccinated at five Community Vaccination Centres and 18 General Out-patient Clinics under the Hospital Authority.

As of 4pm today, a total of about 70 000 persons had reserved their first and second doses of the vaccine online and all booking slots available between February 26 and March 11 have been taken up.

A Government spokesman thanked all those who supported the Vaccination Programme. The Government will announce updates on the arrangements for vaccination later.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (February 23), 23 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 10 427 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 677 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 224 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 230 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 24 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 17 patients are in critical condition, 12 are in serious condition and the remaining 201 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
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Discharged	9835, 9912, 10039, 10221, 10534, 10568, 10571, 10586, 10591, 10612, 10637, 10656, 10660, 10685, 10686, 10693, 10702, 10703, 10773, 10784, 10791, 10822, 10834
Critical	1989, 3496, 6125, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 9049, 9135, 9612, 9907, 9953, 10358, 10367, 10379, 10585, 10611
Serious	6386, 7076, 7468, 8221, 9055, 9550, 9733, 9793, 9867, 10023, 10083, 10708

Government to relax group gathering measures under Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation and extend expiry dates of regulations under Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance

The Government will gazette today (February 23) amendments of various regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) to relax the number of persons allowed in group gatherings in public places from two to four under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G), and extend the expiry dates of the relevant regulations to September 30, 2021. The relevant amendments will take effect at 0.00am tomorrow (February 24).

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, "Taking into account that the local epidemic wave has continued to subside, as well as the need for society as a whole to resume social and economic activities, we announced earlier to continue to relax social distancing measures in a gradual and orderly manner, which includes relaxing the number of persons allowed in group gatherings in public places from two to four starting from February 24, in order to allow more social and economic activities to resume."

The latest details of requirements and restrictions are as follows:

Group gatherings

Unless exempted, group gatherings of more than four persons in public

places will be prohibited during the eight-day period from February 24, 2021 to March 3, 2021. The requirement is also applicable to group gatherings in catering business and scheduled premises regulated under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (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.

Extension of expiry dates of regulations

In view of the need to continue implementing various infection control measures subject to the epidemic situation in the near future, there is a need to extend the expiry dates of various regulations under Cap.599, so that the Government can respond swiftly to the epidemic and implement the corresponding measures under the relevant statutory framework.

The Government will extend the expiry dates for the below regulations from March 31, 2021, for six months to September 30, 2021:

- (1) Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C)
- (2) Prevention and Control of Disease (Disclosure of Information) Regulation (Cap. 599D)
- (3) Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E)
- (4) Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F)
- (5) Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G)
- (6) Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)
- (7) Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I)

The spokesman pointed out that extending the expiry dates of the relevant regulations does not imply that the restrictions currently imposed under those regulations would be maintained until the corresponding expiry dates. Rather, the relevant statutory framework has provisions in place to allow flexibility such that the Government may tighten or relax or even suspend specific requirements and conditions subject to developments of the epidemic situation.

Furthermore, the Government has been urging members of the public to comply with the anti-epidemic measures in relation to mask-wearing and

prohibition of group gatherings of more than the maximum number of persons allowed in public places. The Government has also been ensuring the relevant requirements are complied with through promotion and law enforcement, as well as conducting joint operations when necessary. To facilitate law enforcement actions under Cap. 599G and Cap. 599I, the Government has also amended the Schedule in relation to fixed penalty under the relevant regulations to enable the Commissioner for Labour to perform the relevant function.

"We will continue to closely monitor the developments of the epidemic situation and review the various measures in place from time to time with a view to making suitable adjustments taking into account all relevant factors," the spokesman said.

Missing man in Cheung Sha Wan located

A man who went missing in Cheung Sha Wan has been located.

Man Kan-yan, aged 68, went missing after he left an elderly home on Castle Peak Road on February 16 afternoon. Staff of the elderly home made a report to Police on February 18.

The man was located on Man Kwong Street, Central yesterday afternoon (February 22).

Fintech Co-operation between the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates (CBUAE) jointly announced today (February 23) the exchange of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance collaboration on fintech between the two authorities, with a view to strengthening co-operation between the two jurisdictions in promoting innovative financial services and regulatory development.

The MoU was signed by Mr Eddie Yue, Chief Executive of the HKMA, and H.E. Abdulhamid M. Saeed Alahmadi, Governor of the CBUAE. Under the MoU, the two authorities have agreed that the CBUAE will join the multiple central bank digital currency bridge (m-CBDC Bridge) project collaboratively implemented by the HKMA, the Bank of Thailand, the Digital Currency Institute of the People's Bank of China and the Bank for International Settlements Innovation Hub Centre in Hong Kong.

Mr Yue said, "The HKMA has been making considerable efforts to expand our international fintech network to include counterparts in the Middle East, and CBUAE is naturally a valuable partner of our network. We anticipate that a lot of synergies will arise from the strengthened collaboration under the MoU, and look forward to the CBUAE's joining of our CBDC project to enrich, and bring in new thoughts and perspectives for the project."

H.E. Abdulhamid M. Saeed Alahmadi said, "We are very pleased to embark on this journey with an esteemed institution as the HKMA. CBUAE has recently completed a wholesale CBDC proof of concept project with the Saudi Central Bank to settle domestic and cross-border transactions using central bank money on a distributed ledger technology. Building on this momentum, CBUAE is very excited to be able to use the experience gained so far and participate in the m-CBDC Bridge project. The MoU will certainly set the stage for future joint experimentation of digital innovation between CBUAE and the HKMA."