

## Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session this afternoon (February 16) on the latest social distancing measures:

Reporter: Professor Chan, is the Government bowing to public pressure by relaxing social distancing rules, for health officials and experts have been warning of a rebound in cases after the Lunar New Year? There are already 20 preliminary positive cases today, just the day after the holiday. Are you going to be tightening measures if we see a rebound immediately after 14 days?

Second question is, why are staff of businesses being reopened given an extra week to get tested instead of having a negative test ready before the reopening on Thursday? Is this sort of a loophole that can increase the risk of transmission?

Third, what are the preconditions for the next phases of relaxation? Do cases need to be in the single or a low double digit in the next two weeks? When can schools fully resume operation? Thank you.

Secretary for Food and Health: Your last question is about schools? School resumption, is it?

Reporter: It's kind of two. The preconditions for the next phase of relaxation, like bars and stuff, and when can schools fully resume? Thank you.

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, if we review the current epidemic situation, we have been seeing a decline in the number of confirmed cases. There is a low double digit in the past while. There is a single digit on unlinked cases, so we are also seeing a decline. If we look at the RT figure (real-time effective reproductive number), published by the University of Hong Kong, School of Public Health, again, it is below 1. It is about 0.6. All these different data, including our sewage study which shows a number of negative results in various districts. Therefore, if we are looking at the number of cases every day and also the entire situation, we felt that this is time that we are able to gradually relax some, not all, but some of the scheduled premises and also the catering dine-in business in the evening.

Of course, we will continue to monitor the situation day by day, with all these different parameters that I have just highlighted. As the Chief Executive has earlier said that with the low double digit number (of cases), we might be able to reopen some of the premises and also to resume not only the economic activity, but also to resume people's livelihood. So we think this is the time. But of course, with the reopening or with the relaxation, we are also very very careful about a few things. First of all is that we

want to ensure the risks of contracting the disease in these premises are put down to a very low level. Therefore, we have given out two requirements. First is to have all the staff tested every 14 days. This is actually similar to our target group testing, but this time this is required by law, that we require the restaurant owners or managers to be responsible, to ensure their staff in their restaurants or in these premises are tested every 14 days. Second is to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" app (application) so that it is easier for people to keep a record of places where they go to. It is like a diary. Secondly, if there are confirmed cases in the premises that they went to, then they would be informed so that they would take care of their own health situation.

On top of this, different premises would probably have other requirements in terms of infection control measures. Relevant bureaux and also departments would be working with the trade in terms of highlighting those additional requirements to them.

Give the catering business for example. We want to require them to make sure that the air change is at a satisfactory level so that the risk of infection would be reduced. We understand that this may take a little bit of time. Therefore, we will be putting in the directions at a later stage to allow some grace period for them to make sure, to ensure that they have these air change, either to get an additional air purifier, or to work on their own air conditioning system.

These are some of the examples that we will be putting on. Of course, for the other premises, relevant bureaux will be issuing press releases so that you will find their requirements in more details.

Secondly, your question about the staff. Why give them an additional week? In fact, if we look at the reopening of all these premises, by the 18th, there will a very large number of people going to get the test before. We want to give them a period of time for testing. That is the same as other requirements of compulsory testing, for example, for taxi drivers or residential homes' staff. This is actually similar arrangement and we felt that this is fine with the current arrangement.

As far as the next phase of relaxation is concerned, I think we have to be very very careful because we are closely monitoring at least two areas. One is, during the four-day public holiday, we are monitoring the situation to see if there will be outbreaks and also if there will be a rebound of cases after this long holiday – people have been gathering during the Lunar New Year holiday. Second, after we have relaxed these measures, there are more people going to these premises. Again, we have to be very careful in monitoring the situation. So I do not think the next phase of relaxation will be very soon.

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

---

## Beware of fraudulent "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) today (February 16) reminded members of the public that they should beware of websites purporting to be that of the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app, with some even claiming to have rewritten the app for public downloading recently. The public should stay vigilant and not fall victim to these fraudulent websites.

The spokesman for the OGCIO said that websites or mobile apps of doubtful origin may carry a computer virus or Trojan horse software that pose cyber security risks. Members of the public are strongly advised not to visit or download them.

The spokesman reiterated that no registration is required to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app. There is no central system to record the data, and venue check-in data are saved on users' mobile phones only. Matching of users' check-in data and the issuing of health alerts will only be carried out within the app. Users' whereabouts will not be disclosed to others. The app does not pose a risk to privacy and members of the public can feel at ease when using the app. At present, the number of downloads of the app exceeds 840 000. Over 70 000 public and private venues have participated in the scheme.

The "LeaveHomeSafe" dedicated website is [www.leavehomesafe.gov.hk](http://www.leavehomesafe.gov.hk). Members of the public can download the app from the App Store, Google Play, or Huawei AppGallery, to fight the virus together.

---

## Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (February 16), 24 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. Including a patient (case number: 10782) who was tested positive for antibody earlier and discharged on February 2, a total of 10 232 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged so far.

At present, there are 679 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 237 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 332 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 24 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 22 patients are in critical condition, 16 are

in serious condition and the remaining 294 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
Discharged	9471, 9662, 9888, 9931, 9946, 9952, 10109, 10429, 10490, 10530, 10533, 10536, 10548, 10549, 10550, 10566, 10587, 10608, 10707, 10748, 10765, 10782, 10785, 10786, 10787
Critical	1989, 3496, 6125, 6547, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 8323, 9049, 9135, 9267, 9438, 9612, 9907, 9953, 10358, 10367, 10379, 10585, 10611, 10643
Serious	6386, 7021, 7076, 7468, 8221, 9055, 9550, 9733, 9793, 9867, 9998, 10023, 10083, 10431, 10503, 10708

---

## [FEHD steps up enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations and joins inter-departmental joint operations around Lunar New Year](#)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) took stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations during the Lunar New Year holidays. A spokesman for the FEHD said today (February 16) that the FEHD has stepped up inspections in various districts and conducted joint operations with the Police across the territory in the past four days. The Government reminded catering business and scheduled premises operators to strictly comply with the requirements and directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), and customers patronising catering premises to comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions, including the requirements on group gatherings and wearing of masks.

During the past four days (February 12 to 15), the FEHD (including joint operations involving other departments) inspected more than 3 000 premises

(including 2 650 catering premises and 420 other premises), and initiated procedures on prosecution against 28 catering business/other operators suspected of breaching the requirements under the Regulation (relating to providing dine-in services after 6pm, distance or partitioning between tables, mask-wearing, maximum number of persons seated together at one table, and non-closure of scheduled premises). The FEHD also issued fixed penalty notices to four persons for violating the relevant group gathering requirement.

If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business or scheduled premises contravenes the regulations under the Regulation, he or she is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Customers within catering premises in breach of the requirement on maximum number of persons seated together at one table are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). Moreover, customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking otherwise are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

The spokesman stressed that the FEHD will continue to step up law enforcement and publicity efforts and will deploy additional manpower to conduct joint operations with the Police. Stringent enforcement actions will be taken against offenders to ensure compliance with relevant regulations. He also reminded operators concerned and the public to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together.

---

## **Rating and Valuation Department to resume normal services**

In line with the Government's announcement to fully resume normal public services, the Rating and Valuation Department (RVD) announced today (February 16) that from February 18, the opening hours of its enquiry counters will resume as 8.15am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (public holidays excluded).

To achieve social distancing, crowd control measures may be implemented at the enquiry counters when necessary, and the waiting time for service may be longer. Members of the public are encouraged to use the department's 24-hour electronic services ([www.rvd.gov.hk](http://www.rvd.gov.hk)) to submit forms or obtain information as far as possible. They may also contact the department by email ([enquiries@rvd.gov.hk](mailto:enquiries@rvd.gov.hk)), fax (2152 0138) or phone (2152 0111/2152 2152).

The RVD appeals to members of the public to download and use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app before they visit the department's enquiry counters in person. This is to align with the arrangement starting from March 1 that members of the public will be required to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app or register relevant information before entering government buildings or offices.