

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session this evening (January 21) on the operation at Yat Kwai House in Kwai Chung Estate:

Reporter: Last year the lockdown in Jordan lasted for two days, why lockdown for five days for just a building now? And also what would happen if residents do not go home tonight? Thanks.

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, thank you very much for your question. Today we announced this "restriction-testing declaration" (RTD), this operation will start tonight. The reason why this is a five-day operation is mainly because we have identified some cases in the building. We have also identified a super spreader who has been going round the building. So, there could be some cases which are in their incubation period at this moment of time and are living in the building. So this is our suspicion, I think it is prudent to have this operation whereby we restrict residents' movements and have compulsory testing in the next few days. If there are cases, we can find out immediately, so that we can attain "early detection, early identification and early isolation". This is the reason why the operation is five days. And your second question is?

Reporter: (inaudible)

Secretary for Food and Health: I strongly appeal people who are now perhaps still at work to go home tonight like what they did normally. The Housing Department will arrange a number of supportive operations like meal delivery and so on. But at the same time, we will also be setting up mobile testing stations near the building, so people can orderly come down to the mobile testing stations to get their compulsory testing done. I strongly appeal to that. In our observation, during the past two years in controlling the epidemic, our Hong Kong people are actually quite compliant to compulsory testing order and all these "restriction-testing declarations". I think they are more or less compliant and also they understand that this could bring them some inconvenience but at the same time this is for their common good, and this is also to protect everybody in Hong Kong, not only those from the building.

Reporter: Will there be any compensation for affected residents who cannot go to work during this five-day operation? Is it effective to only lockdown or do a "restriction-testing declaration" on Yat Kwai House when we know there are cases in other buildings of this estate? If more cases appear in other buildings, would that essentially make this lockdown operation meaningless? Lastly, I would just like to know if the cleaner, who is a preliminary case, is vaccinated.

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, we understand with an operation of RTD for five days, people may feel that there is inconvenience, such as what you have just said that they may not be able to go to work. We appeal to the employers if they have employees who are being caught in this operation, I hope they will treat this situation in a more open and understanding manner, so that they won't deduct people's salary, because this is an epidemic control operation in Hong Kong. With this epidemic control operation, the most important aim is to firstly identify or to detect cases within the building, and secondly, we want to stop the transmission chains from going further. This is really for the common good. Of course, there are other districts or other places that we are also concerned, for example Aberdeen and Sham Shui Po. For these areas, we have issued compulsory testing notice (CTN) and added a number of mobile testing stations there. We would like to appeal to people to go for testing if they are living in these areas. If we identify risks associated in these areas that warrant another RTD in another building or in another district, we will continue to arrange similar operations. Those measures would not stop because RTDs and CTNs are very effective and critical measures to control our epidemic situation in Hong Kong.

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