

EDB to provide one-off relief grant to affected sectors

The Education Bureau (EDB) issued letters/circular memoranda today (January 18) to inform schools of the details about the provision of relief grants and subsidies related to the areas of education under the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF). The total expenditure is about \$338.4 million.

A spokesman for the EDB said that the Government announced last Friday (January 14) measures for the fifth round of the AEF to assist the sectors directly affected by the anti-epidemic measures. To alleviate the financial hardship arising from restrictions on face-to-face classes and on-campus school activities, especially the suspension of face-to-face classes of primary schools and kindergartens (KGs) from mid-January 2022, the AEF will provide all KGs, private primary and secondary day schools as well as private schools offering non-formal curriculum (PSNFCs) (generally referred to as "tutorial schools") with a one-off grant.

The grant, ranging from \$30,000 to \$80,000, will be provided to each KG and private day school. The additional expenditure is estimated to be \$67.5 million, benefitting about 1 000 KGs and 185 private day schools. Details are as follows:

- Schools joining the kindergarten education scheme (Scheme-KGs) will receive a grant ranging from \$30,000 to \$80,000, depending on their types (i.e. half-day, whole-day and long whole-day) and sizes;
- For non-Scheme KGs, each KG will receive a grant of \$40,000; and
- Private day schools (including schools under the English Schools Foundation, international schools, private independent schools and other registered private primary and secondary day schools offering formal curriculum) will each receive a grant of \$40,000.

Regarding PSNFCs, a one-off relief grant of \$20,000 will be given to each PSNFC which has been registered under the Education Ordinance and is in operation on the issuance date of the circular memorandum. The additional expenditure is estimated to be \$54 million, benefitting some 2 700 PSNFCs.

Meanwhile, one-off relief grants under the AEF will be provided to the following service suppliers or service providers as their businesses and incomes were affected by restrictions on face-to-face classes and on-campus school activities. The additional expenditure is estimated to be \$216.9 million. Details are as follows:

- Catering outlet operators at primary and secondary day schools: a one-off relief grant of \$40,000 to each tuck shop or canteen;

- Lunchbox suppliers of primary and secondary day schools: a one-off relief grant of \$5,000 per school each provider is serving;
- School bus drivers, school private light bus drivers and escorts (commonly called "nannies"): a one-off relief grant of \$6,700 for each driver and \$6,700 per vehicle for nannies (the subsidy of \$6,700 will be shared among nannies based on their proportion of service time if more than one nanny serve in the same vehicle); and
- Instructors, coaches, trainers and operators of interest classes engaged by schools: a one-off relief grant of \$5,000 to each operator/service provider.

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The letters/circular memoranda, which have been uploaded to the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-sch/diseases-prevention/special_anti-epidemic_subsidy.html), have detailed the application and disbursement arrangements for the relevant grants. The EDB will effect payment as soon as possible after verification of the relevant information.

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Aberdeen

The Government today (January 18) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 6.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Aberdeen (i.e. Ka Sing House (Block A), Ka Lung Court, 33 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen. See Annex) 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 "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 6.30am tomorrow (January 19).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a case tested positive who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the test result involved a mutant strain, the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, so the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the

relevant area after the test result was found to be positive."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 11pm today. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 6.30am tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

According to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from January 8, 2022 to January 18, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before January 20, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, and having considered relevant infection risks, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the confirmed local case carrying variants of concern are required to undergo compulsory testing on days 3, 7, 12 and 19 counting from the day subsequent to that when the relevant confirmed case last stayed in that building before being admitted to hospital for treatment or leaving Hong Kong.

The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 6.30pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

[Fish ball sample detected with methylmercury at level that may have breached Food Adulteration \(Metallic Contamination\) Regulations](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (January 18) announced that a loose-packed fish ball sample was detected with methylmercury, a metallic contaminant, at a level which may have contravened the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap 132V). The CFS is following up on the incident.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a restaurant in Mong Kok for testing when following up on an earlier relevant incident. The test result showed that the sample contained methylmercury at a level of 0.2 parts per million. The CFS' risk assessment revealed that if prolonged consumption of the compounded food occurs, the metal level concerned may pose adverse effects on health."

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the restaurant concerned and had requested it to stop the sale of the affected product. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence.

"Methylmercury is the major form of mercury in fish. At high levels, mercury can affect foetal brain development, and affect vision, hearing, muscle co-ordination and memory in adults. Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS' Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, alfonso, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects

of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children, should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and avoid consumption of the aforementioned types of fish to minimise excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," he added.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations, any person who sells food with metallic contamination in an amount that is dangerous or prejudicial to health is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.

Temporary JoyYou Card Application Service Centre in Hin Keng continues to be closed temporarily

The Transport Department today (January 18) said that in view of the announcement made by the Home Affairs Department that all community halls and community centres (except when being used as temporary cold shelters) will continue to be temporarily closed until February 3, the temporary JoyYou Card Application Service Centre located at Conference Room, 2/F, Hin Keng Neighbourhood Community Centre, 5 Hin Wo Lane, Tai Wai, Sha Tin, will also be closed until February 3.

For enquiries, please call the service hotline: 2266 2222 (press 6, 2, 3 and 0 after choosing the language to contact operators directly).

Suspicious website related to Dah Sing Bank, Limited

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Dah Sing Bank, Limited relating to a suspicious website, which has been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or e-mails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.