

## Latest arrangements of Water Supplies Department's public services

In view of the latest situation of COVID-19, the Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced today (January 18) that the Guided Tours to Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir and the "Excursion with Water Save Dave" Visiting Programme for individuals and groups from January 21 to February 3 will be cancelled. The H2OPE Centre (Water Resources Public Education Centre) will also continue to be closed.

In addition, to reduce social contact, members of the public are advised to minimise visiting the Customer Enquiries Centres and the Document Management Centre of the WSD in person unless necessary. The public can file enquiries as well as requests for service through the Customer Services Hotline (2824 5000) or by email ([wsdinfo@wsd.gov.hk](mailto:wsdinfo@wsd.gov.hk)).

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## Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (January 18):

Reporter: The first question is about Dr Gabriel Leung's advice because he was saying, I think earlier last week, that the Government can consider rolling out, allowing night time dining again until 8pm. Is this something the authorities can or is considering? And secondly, about the arrangement you just announced that the "vaccine bubble" will be rolled out earlier. So are you concerned long queues outside the vaccination centres will emerge again, like what we saw earlier this month? And have you discussed the arrangement with the sectors involved, including, for example, the catering industry? Can they cope with this arrangement because this arrangement has been amended time and again? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Of course, Professor Gabriel Leung is one of my expert advisors, and The University of Hong Kong has been commissioned by us to do a weekly assessment on the situation; but at the moment, since we have implemented the social distancing measures including the restriction of dine-in service in restaurants until February 3, there is no plan to relax this particular measure, especially in view of – you have heard me reporting – two local clusters which are of concern: one is about the quarantine hotel, which has led to the cases of a quarantined woman in the hotel plus nine relatives

or close relatives; the other is the pet shop cluster, which we are very worried about. For the time being, we have no plan to relax what we have already announced for implementation; but going forward, of course, we will adjust our measures. If we are to allow dine-in service again – whether it will be back to the pre-Omicron situation which was very relaxed or we will adopt other means, this is something that we will certainly consider.

That brings me to answering your second question. One of the arrangements that we could consider after this round of social distancing measures is to allow businesses to operate under "vaccine bubble". In other words, staff and customers could only go into prescribed premises after they have been vaccinated. As a result of that suggestion, we are already seeing an increase – I wouldn't describe it as a surge – but an increase in vaccination amongst the population, especially amongst the older population, which is to be welcomed. Since we have been talking about this "vaccine bubble" for some time, and meanwhile we have been enhancing the capacity of our vaccination centres, I'm not worried about the capacity constraint leading to long queues. In fact, at the moment, we are doing about 40 000 doses every day but our capacity far exceeds 40 000, but I would advise members of the public to try to book an appointment to get vaccinated and leave the so-called daily quota for the elderly who find it less easy to book online.

About adopting "vaccine bubble" for an earlier resumption of business, we would certainly listen to what the sector has to say. In fact, the idea was volunteered by the trade. When they heard that we might be imposing more social distancing measures, I heard the trade, including the restaurant trade and the beauty parlour trade, actually volunteered, "Why didn't the Government allow us to operate on the basis of 'vaccine bubble'? We could ask our customers to get vaccinated before offering them the service." So in the next two weeks or so, we'll continue to engage them and see whether we can come up with more acceptable arrangements that will give us the assurance on fighting the epidemic but, at the same time, allow the business to operate. I fully understand their grievances and their hardship. We try to help through the AEF (Anti-epidemic Fund) 5.0 and we will continue to closely monitor the situation and consider other means of support as and when necessary.

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

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## **Latest relief measures of Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme under Anti-epidemic Fund**

The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) announced today (January 18) that the

Government has allocated \$34.8 million under the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) to the Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme with a view to supporting performing arts groups, individual arts practitioners and freelancers who have been affected by the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic.

The HAB will provide a one-off subsidy of \$40,000 to each of the over 100 performing arts groups which are affected by the epidemic. These groups include the major performing arts groups, arts groups funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), venue partners of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme grantees. The HAB will also entrust the HKADC and the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong to provide a one-off subsidy of \$5,000 to each eligible individual arts practitioner and freelancer who had earlier benefited from the Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme. The number of beneficiaries is estimated to reach 6 000.

At the same time, the HAB announced that \$4 million will be allocated from the AEF to provide a one-off subsidy of \$50,000 to each eligible company of the performing industry through the Performing Industry Association (Hong Kong) Limited. About 80 companies are expected to benefit from this measure.

A spokesperson of the HAB said, "To safeguard public health and in accordance with the anti-epidemic requirements, the Government has tightened social distancing measures with effect from January 7. We understand that these measures have affected programme arrangements and operations of arts groups, the livelihood of individual arts practitioners and freelancers as well as those companies organising pop concerts in the performing industry. We hope that these measures will provide some relief to the groups and persons concerned."

The HAB expects that the disbursement of the above subsidies will be in batches and start before end-January.

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## **Government completes enforcement action on compulsory testing notice at building in North Point**

The Eastern District Office together with the Eastern Police District and the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) conducted an enforcement operation today (January 18) at a building in North Point, which was included in a compulsory testing notice earlier. The operation started at around 7am and ended at around 9.30am today.

Starting from around 7am today, persons subject to compulsory testing of

Coral Court Blocks B3, B4 and C2, 51-67 Cloud View Road, North Point, were requested to provide the SMS notification received through a mobile phone or related certification containing the results of COVID-19 tests, to show that they had taken such tests as required pursuant to the compulsory testing notice of the building within the specified period issued by the Government earlier on. The Government arranged for staff to verify the testing certifications of the persons subject to compulsory testing at the entrances/exits of the building, and conducted checks in the building to verify whether persons subject to compulsory testing had undergone testing in compliance with the requirement.

During the operation, test records of around 50 persons were checked. Among them, one person was found to have violated the compulsory testing notice. The Government has issued a compulsory testing order to her, requiring her to undergo testing within a specified period. Non-compliance with a compulsory testing order is an offence, and offenders are liable to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety. Persons subject to testing under a compulsory testing notice 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.

The Government wishes to thank the many residents who had complied with the compulsory testing notice for their co-operation to fight against the virus together. The Government will continue to enforce the law strictly. All persons subject to compulsory testing should comply with the compulsory testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notice may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Non-compliance with the order is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Eastern District Office is grateful for the support and co-operation of the Police and the AMS to enable the enforcement action to be carried out smoothly. The Government understands that the enforcement process may cause some inconvenience to the residents, but hopes that the residents can understand.

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# Scheme on Relief Grants for Interest Class Instructors Hired by Organisations Subvented by the Social Welfare Department (Phase 4) to open for application from January 20

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) said today (January 18) that the Scheme on Relief Grants for Interest Class Instructors Hired by Organisations Subvented by the Social Welfare Department (Phase 4) will be open for application from January 20 till March 31. Application details will be uploaded to the SWD website on January 20. Completed application forms are to be submitted to the SWD through the subvented welfare service units concerned.

As one of the measures under the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund, Phase 4 of the scheme aims at providing a one-off relief grant of \$5,000 for each of the eligible interest class instructors engaged/planned to be engaged by subvented welfare service units of the SWD-subvented organisations for providing training in arts, dancing, handicraft work, sports and more for service users during the first quarter of 2022, where the units' services have been suspended and the instructors' income affected owing to the epidemic situation, so as to provide support and help lessen the impact of COVID-19 on them. For those instructors who have submitted applications to the Education Bureau for relief grants for school instructors of learning/interest classes or to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department for relief grants for registered sports coaches, further submission to the SWD is not required.