

## **AFCD to provide ex-gratia payment for the cancellation of FarmFest 2022**

FarmFest 2022, originally scheduled to be held from January 7 to 9 at Fa Hui Park in Mong Kok, was cancelled in light of the developments of the COVID-19 epidemic. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (January 17) announced that those fishermen, farmers, fishing units and farming units that signed a contract and paid a rental fee in full could apply for a one-off ex-gratia payment.

A spokesman for the AFCD said, "The cancellation of FarmFest 2022 was announced only less than two days before its scheduled commencement on January 7. Participating units suffered losses and faced challenges in marketing a large volume of highly perishable produce within a short time. Many participating units had also incurred other costs in setting up sale booths, arranging transportation and hiring of labour, etc. To provide financial relief to the participating units from the agriculture and fisheries sector, the AFCD today announced that if they had already signed a contract with the Fish Marketing Organization or Vegetable Marketing Organization and paid the rental fee in full, they may apply to the AFCD for a one-off ex-gratia payment of \$5,000 under the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund."

Eligible fishermen, farmers, fishing units and farming units can apply between today and February 18. The AFCD will take the initiative to phone eligible applicants, send out the application forms by email and provide necessary assistance to them. For enquiries, please call 2150 7099 (for fisheries booths) or 2670 1161 (for agricultural booths).

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## **Temporary closure of community halls and community centres**

In view of the latest COVID-19 situation and to align with the social distancing measures of the Government, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) announced today (January 17) that all community halls and community centres, except when being used as temporary cold shelters or temporary shelters for emergency situations, will continue to be temporarily closed until February 3.

For enquiries, please call the HAD's enquiry hotline at 2835 2500.

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## Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Cheung Sha Wan

The Government today (January 17) 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 7.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Cheung Sha Wan (i.e. Po Wah Court, 450-464 Un Chau Street, Cheung Sha Wan, excluding the shops located on G/F of Po Wah Court. 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 7am tomorrow (January 18).

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 preliminarily positive who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the preliminary 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 12am tomorrow. 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 7am 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 10, 2022 to January 17, 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 19, 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 case tested preliminarily positive carrying variant of concern suspected to be Omicron are required to undergo compulsory testing on days 2, 3, 4, 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 7.30pm 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.

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## **LCSD to provide ex-gratia payment to personnel affected by cancellation of programmes under Anti-epidemic Fund**

A spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) said today (January 17) that to align with the Government's tightening of social distancing measures, the LCSD had closed its leisure and cultural venues/facilities from January 7, and the recreation and sports programmes to be organised or subvented by the LCSD were also cancelled. To relieve the impact of the epidemic, the LCSD will arrange ex-gratia payments to those personnel engaged in these recreation and sports programmes, including coaches and instructors under the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund.

The ex-gratia payment is being offered to those directly engaged by the LCSD, or sports coaches and staff hired by National Sports Associations (NSAs) or sports organisations (SOs) subvented under the Sports Subvention Scheme, or sports coaches who were engaged by NSAs or SOs through the LCSD Direct Purchase Authority Management System to provide services. The ex-gratia payment is equivalent to the amount of their original full remuneration for the cancelled programmes scheduled to commence or to be held from January 7 to February 3, 2022.

Coaches and personnel benefiting from this subsidy scheme are not required to submit applications. The LCSD will release the ex-gratia payment to the personnel directly or through the relevant NSAs and SOs. Disbursement of the ex-gratia payment is expected to start in February 2022 in batches.

In addition, the LCSD will make the same arrangement and provide the ex-gratia payment to instructors and speakers of seminars and workshops organised by the Hong Kong Public Libraries whose programmes were cancelled and could not be rescheduled due to venue closures amid the epidemic. Part-time ushers and part-time ticketing assistants affected by the closure of cultural venues will also be provided with the ex-gratia payment.

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## **Additional grant to registered sports coaches from Anti-epidemic Fund**

A spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) said today (January 17) that the One-off Grant to Registered Sports Coaches scheme, relaunched under the Anti-epidemic Fund, will be open for application from January 20 (Thursday). The scheme will provide a one-off grant of \$5,000 for each eligible registered sports coach.

Due to the deteriorating COVID-19 epidemic situation in early January, the Government further tightened up the social distancing measures. LCSD facilities were temporarily closed again starting from January 7. As a result, many sports training activities that relied on the provision of LCSD facilities were suspended again. The one-off grant scheme aims to further provide timely financial relief to eligible registered sports coaches.

Sports coaches registered under National Sports Associations or recognised sports organisations who had provided coaching services from January 1 to December 31, 2021, are eligible to apply. They can submit applications to the Sports Funding Office of the LCSD by February 28. The grant will be disbursed in batches from February after receipt of the completed application form and relevant documents.

The application form and guidelines of the scheme will be available from the LCSD website ([www.lcsd.gov.hk](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk)) and the 18 District Leisure Services Offices of the LCSD from January 20. Please call 2601 7473 for enquiries.