

Transcript of remarks of press conference on anti-epidemic measures (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference this afternoon (January 14). Also joining were the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr John Lee; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam; and the Head of the Human Resources Planning and Poverty Co-ordination Unit of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office, Ms Angelina Kwan. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Good evening. First of all, can we trust the Government this time that the social distancing rules will be lifted by February 3, because a lot of businesses are hopping on that to be resumed? What is the threshold for opening such premises and can these businesses operate under a "vaccine bubble" even if there are still some local cases by then? And today's banner says we want to resume travel as well, but it's really difficult for people to believe that, given that there are 150 countries of high risk and eight countries banned altogether at this point. So will this have any impact on Hong Kong's cargo flights and cargo logistics at this point, and what can you do to guarantee that these flight bans will be eased and flights will be resumed in a gradual manner to Hong Kong? A third question is on schools. You didn't mention schools today so far, so how long will schools have to shut and what is the vaccine requirement for children aged under 12 after the Chinese New Year? Thank you.

Chief Executive: All right, three questions altogether. The first general response is I'm afraid nobody could give any guarantee in a public health crisis like this. No one could guarantee whether we will have another dangerous variant after Omicron. The health authorities in every government are trying their very, very best to fight the pandemic in order to protect their people. Hong Kong has been fighting COVID-19 for exactly two years, and we have managed to protect our people. As I have just quoted, in terms of the total number of confirmed cases, we were behind over 170 countries globally; in terms of confirmed cases per 1 million population and fatalities per 1 million population, we are only 4 per cent of the global average, let alone when compared with the USA or European countries. We have been doing our very best, but no one could give a guarantee because this virus is changing, and changing quite rapidly from one variant to another variant.

Apart from that general response, I would say that in terms of social distancing measures on this occasion, we have listened to what the trade has told us, that they want a little bit more certainty. Previously, we just rolled out the social distancing measures for 14 days, and another 14 days, or even without an end date. This has created a lot of anxiety and uncertainties for the trade. Now that we are in a situation better than the

fourth wave because of vaccination – and I hope to see the vaccination rate to go up, say to over 80 or close to 90 per cent – that would give us a better basis to now foretell that by then, after the expiry of the second 14 days, we may be able to allow these premises to start operating again under a "vaccine bubble". In other words, their staff and customers have to be vaccinated before they can go into their premises. But again there is no guarantee, because if the Omicron variant has given rise to a major outbreak in Hong Kong, then I don't think the Hong Kong population would support us to blindly lift the social distancing measures and put our people at risk. That is the situation.

About resuming travel, of course we want to resume travel with the Mainland and resume travel with the rest of the world. Since we have attained zero local infection, that is no local infection for a very long time, we have to be very vigilant in ensuring we are not importing cases. When you look around the world, they have two million, three million cases every day. We should be worried about allowing more travellers coming from those places, and hence we are putting countries under Group A or enhanced Group A, on which we will put even more restrictions. That will certainly have a major impact on many aspects of Hong Kong. It's not just the cargo. Cargo flow is more affected by the latest imposition of stringent measures on the airlines. Without travelling or quarantine-free arrangement for overseas arrivals, that of course affects Hong Kong – being an international city, an international financial centre and a business hub, with investors coming in, and the organisation of major events and concerts and art shows and so on. We know very well there are consequences, but we have to weigh these consequences against the health risks to the people of Hong Kong, because these viruses could kill people. If you look at the world, hundreds of people are still dying in European countries nowadays, and I have my utmost duty to protect the health of the Hong Kong people. Cargo flights will be affected by the latest measures because of non-compliance by a couple of crew people, and as a result of that I have already warned that there will be a shortage of cargo flights, which means that there will be a significant drop in cargoes and goods being brought in by air, and I have noticed that many people are already commenting that that sort of situation will shortly emerge in Hong Kong.

About schools, we have only suspended face-to-face learning in kindergartens, child care centres and primary schools, from Primary One to Primary Six. We will try our very best, and by now I think we could confidently say that we will allow secondary schools to operate face-to-face learning until they have their Chinese New Year holiday. After the Chinese New Year holiday, of course we would like to see schools resuming their face-to-face learning, but again there could be no guarantee because much would depend on what will happen in the next two to three weeks in Hong Kong's COVID-19 situation. Applying vaccination to young children is a stated government policy – I mentioned it earlier this week. So we will, after Chinese New Year, especially when school children go back to school, arrange school-based outreach vaccination teams to apply vaccination to children from five to 11 years old in schools. But we will not go that far to make vaccination a prerequisite for going back to school, because education is a

right of the child. We will honour the child's right to be educated at school, but we will do all our best to encourage and promote vaccination amongst young children for their own sake.

Thank you.

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



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

â€‹The Eastern District Office together with the Eastern Police District and the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) conducted an enforcement operation today (January 14) at a building in North Point, which was included in a compulsory testing notice earlier. The operation started at around 6pm and ended at around 9pm today.

Starting from around 6pm 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 130 persons were checked. Among them, three persons were found to have violated the compulsory testing notice. The Government has issued compulsory testing orders to them, requiring them 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.

[Wild pig carcass samples test positive for ASF virus](#)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (January 14) announced that samples taken from a wild pig carcass had tested positive for African Swine Fever (ASF) virus under the surveillance programme for ASF.

As there were a number of wild pig deaths found in the area around Wong Yue Tan in Tai Po, samples were collected from a wild pig carcass which was in a relatively intact state found in the abovementioned area for tests. Results are positive for ASF virus. The AFCD will continue to monitor any deaths that warrant attention, and maintain surveillance in the wild pig population.

Currently, no pig farms are found affected by this case. There are no pig farms located within three kilometres of Wong Yue Tan. All local pig farmers have been immediately notified about the case and have been advised

to enhance farm biosecurity to prevent intrusion of wild pigs and introduction of ASF virus into their farms. Local pig farmers are also reminded to notify the AFCD if their pigs show any health issues. The AFCD has been closely monitoring the health of animals on all local pig farms and samples will be collected for testing if necessary.

An AFCD spokesman said, "ASF is a highly contagious disease affecting domestic and wild pigs. However, it is not a zoonotic disease and does not infect humans and hence does not cause any food safety risk. Well-cooked pork is safe for consumption. The case will not affect the supply of live pigs to the local market."

The spokesman stressed that for personal safety and prevention of foods contaminated with ASF virus to be introduced to wild pigs, members of the public should keep away from them. Do not feed any wildlife, including wild pigs, and put garbage in lidded bins. If any dead wild pig is found, please report via 1823.

With a view to strengthening the surveillance of ASF on local wild pigs, the AFCD has been working with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) on a surveillance programme for ASF since late 2019. This has involved testing of ASF virus in wild pig carcasses reported by the FEHD. The programme includes the New Territories and Kowloon. Other areas found with a large number of wild pig deaths are also included. To enable early detection, samples collected from humanely dispatched wild pigs are also tested for ASF.

Government steps up enforcement against shop front extension at Mong Kok Flower Market

The goods placed by some shop operators on the walkways and public roads at the Mong Kok Flower Market (MKFM) are obstructing the passageways, endangering public and traffic safety in particular when the pedestrian flow in the area is anticipated to increase in the run-up to the Chinese New Year. To keep the passageway clear, the Yau Tsim Mong District Office (YTMDO), the Mong Kok District of the Hong Kong Police Force and the Mong Kok District Environmental Hygiene Office of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department met shop operators at the MKFM today (January 14) reminding them again to be self-disciplined and not to place goods on pedestrian walkway or public road to cause danger. The relevant Government departments will step up inspection and enforcement in the area of the MKFM, including clearing relevant goods or articles that cause street obstruction.

The YTMDO also reminded the shop operators to comply strictly with anti-epidemic measures, and distributed to them advice on public health and

infection control.

The Government will also display promotional banners at a number of spots in MKFM and hand out notices to shop operators shortly, to remind them not to occupy public places or roads with goods or articles which will impede the flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The Government appeals to shop operators not to occupy public places for the purpose of conducting or facilitating business activities, which would not only cause obstruction of passageway but jeopardise the safety of road users. Depending on the situation, enforcement departments may issue fixed penalty notices of \$1,500 to offenders, or issue summonses and/or take arrest actions to clear the goods or articles that cause the obstruction.

Government announces cancellation of 2022 Lunar New Year fairs

The Government announced today (January 14) that in view of the latest developments of the COVID-19 epidemic, it has decided to cancel the Lunar New Year (LNY) fairs at 15 locations and Fong Ma Po New Year Fair at Lam Tsuen in Tai Po this year.

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said, "The epidemic situation in Hong Kong has evolved quickly. There are still silent transmission chain in the community and the risk of cluster outbreaks. The Government has also tightened a series of social distancing measures earlier."

"Earlier on, the Government has already adjusted the scale of the LNY fairs this year and promulgated a series of anti-epidemic measures. However, it is possible that a large number of people may gather at the LNY fairs and the festival fair. The Government, after taking into account the development of the epidemic, has decided to cancel this year's LNY fairs and Fong Ma Po New Year Fair at Lam Tsuen in Tai Po so as to protect the health of stall owners and the public on site and reduce the risk of spread of the disease," he added.

â€‹The FEHD will inform the successful stall bidders of the decision in writing. Apart from arranging full refund of the stall licence fee to them in accordance with the licence agreement as soon as possible, the FEHD will also grant the licensees concerned an ex-gratia payment pitched at 50 per cent of the stall licence fee under the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund.