

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Causeway Bay (2)

The Government today (January 4) 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 11.05pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Causeway Bay (i.e. Chesterfield Mansion, 11 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay. 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 8am tomorrow (January 5).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a preliminary tested positive case 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 2am 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 8am 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.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from January 2, 2022 to January 4, 2022, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, 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 December 15, 2021 to January 4, 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 6, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the preliminary tested positive case 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 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.

Government makes "restriction-testing declaration" and issues compulsory

testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Causeway Bay

The Government today (January 4) 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 10.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Causeway Bay (i.e. Causeway Tower, 16-22 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay. 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 8am tomorrow (January 5).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a preliminary tested positive case 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 arrange dedicated staff to collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 3am tomorrow. 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 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 8am 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.

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2, 2022 to January 4, 2022, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, 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 December 15, 2021 to January 4, 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 6, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the preliminary tested positive case 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 10.30pm 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.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (January 4), nine patients who had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus (case numbers: 12424, 12427, 12428, 12444, 12450, 12471, 12477, 12487 and 12489) were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 12 228 patients have been discharged.

A total of 245 patients who have tested positive are currently hospitalised in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, the Hospital Authority (HA) Infectious Disease Centre and the Community Treatment Facility at Asia-World Expo. Among those patients, one is in serious condition (case number: 12548) while the remainder are in stable condition.

The HA will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

CHP investigates local case tested preliminarily positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus involving mutant strains at Tsui Ning Garden in Tuen Mun

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 4) said that it is investigating a local case tested preliminarily positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus involving mutant strains and is tracing the possible source of infection.

The case involves a 42-year-old male patient living at Block 2, Tsui Ning Garden, Tuen Mun. He developed fever and headache on January 2 and consulted a private doctor on January 3. His specimen submitted on the same day tested preliminarily positive carrying N501Y and T478K mutant strains. His CT value is around 18 after hospital admission. The CHP suspects at this stage that the patient carries the Omicron variant, but whole genome sequencing still needs to be conducted to confirm whether the patient carries the Omicron variant. He worked at Unit A, 13/F, Lee & Man Commercial Center, 169 Electric Road, North Point, where he last went to work on December 31. The patient has not received COVID-19 vaccination.

Initial investigation revealed that he has no recent travel history and has not visited Moon Palace or the shopping mall (Festival Walk) where cases tested positive appeared. The CHP has so far not found any close contacts between the case and other recent cases tested positive, and is now investigating the places where the patient visited in the past 21 days in order to ascertain the infection source and to terminate the silent transmission chains in the community.

As the patient carries a mutant strain with higher transmissibility and risk of infection, the Government has made a "restriction-testing declaration" tonight for the building where the patient resided in Hong Kong

(Block 2, Tsui Ning Garden, Tuen Mun) and persons who resided or worked at the building will be subject to increased compulsory testing frequency. The places where he had visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period will also be included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

The CHP is arranging for the close contacts of the case to undergo quarantine at a quarantine centre for 21 days. Epidemiological investigation and contact tracing of the case will continue.

The spokesman for the CHP said, "The Government has remained vigilant and has been closely monitoring the latest scientific data on mutant strains as well as the epidemic situation of various places. The most stringent anti-epidemic measures will be implemented to prevent the mutant strains from spreading in the local community."

At the moment, the adverse impact on the epidemic situation caused by the newly emerged mutant strains is not fully known yet, but vaccination is still essential to prevent severe cases and deaths from COVID-19 infection. The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk). The CHP also urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with exposure to infection risk, to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.

CHP of DH provides update on SARS-CoV-2 virus cases related to Moon Palace

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 4) provided updates on the epidemiological investigation and contact tracing of SARS-CoV-2 virus cases involving Moon Palace at Festival Walk, including a case that tested preliminarily positive related to Moon Palace.

The case that tested preliminarily positive, which is related to Moon Palace, involves a 13-year-old female who is the daughter of case 12673. She had a meal at Moon Palace from around noon to 2pm on December 27 with case 12673. She was arranged to conduct quarantine at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre on December 31 and her specimen collected on the same day tested negative. She developed a fever on January 3 and was sent to a public hospital. Her specimen collected today after admission tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value less than 30, carrying N501Y and T478K mutant strains.

The patient has no recent travel history. She received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty) on July 29 and August 20 in Hong Kong.

The patient lives in Block 6, Villa Athena, 600 Sai Sha Road, Ma On Shan, with case 12673. The patient is a student and according to information provided by her, she mainly stayed at home after having a meal at Moon Palace on December 27 until she was arranged to undergo quarantine at the quarantine centre on December 31. The Government has made a "restriction-testing declaration" for the building concerned on January 1 and no case that tested positive was found.

There are so far six cases (case 12611, 12637, 12654, 12673, 12708 and 12747) that tested positive and a case that tested preliminarily positive as mentioned above related to Moon Palace. The whole genome sequencing analysis conducted by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch showed that the genetic sequences of cases 12673 and 12708 are highly similar to those of 12611, 12637 and 12654.

Also, among the 46 environmental samples collected by the CHP in Moon Palace yesterday (January 3), none tested positive. The 44 environmental samples collected earlier also had no positive test result. The CHP is continuing its contact tracing work of cases related to Moon Palace. The CHP has successfully contacted all 207 customers who have patronised the restaurant from 1pm to 3pm on December 27 and have arranged for them to undergo quarantine at the quarantine centre. The CHP reminds any person who had been present at Festival Walk, Kowloon Tong from 1pm to 5pm on December 27 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and visitors), to undergo testing again on January 8 and 15 in accordance with the compulsory testing notice.