

Sha Tin Jockey Club Swimming Pool temporarily closed

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 30) that Sha Tin Jockey Club Swimming Pool in Sha Tin District has been temporarily closed for cleaning and superchlorination following the discovery of a small amount of vomit in the pool.

It will be reopened at 6.30am tomorrow (December 31).

The department appeals to swimmers to be considerate and to keep the swimming pools clean. They are advised not to swim after a full meal and should use the toilet facilities if necessary before swimming.

Joint Office for investigation of water seepage launches thematic webpage

The Joint Office (JO) for investigation of reports on water seepage in buildings set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department today (December 30) launched a one-stop [thematic webpage on water seepage](#) for the industry and members of the public to obtain relevant information.

A spokesman for the JO said, "The thematic webpage includes information related to water seepage, including introductions to the common causes of water seepage and the methods to conduct household water seepage tests, as well as the assistance provided by the JO and its relevant procedures. The webpage also sets out a list of professional practitioners on water seepage investigation, a list of consultancy firms providing professional advice and a list of licensed plumbers, with a view to assisting members of the public to engage professionals to investigate and resolve water seepage problems.

In addition, a customer service team has been set up under the JO to promote public health education on water seepage in buildings, enhance public

awareness on water seepage matters and the work of the JO, and advise on practical ways to resolve water seepage disputes.

"Apart from reorganising the 19 District Regional Offices into four Regional Joint Offices (RJOs) progressively since 2020, the further establishment of the thematic webpage and the customer service team would help the RJOs to serve the public with a sole duty and in a dedicated manner under a brand new look," the spokesman added.

The contact information of the four RJOs is detailed in the Annex. Their operating hours are from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm from Monday to Friday.

Conditional free COVID-19 testing service continues for targeted groups

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) announced today (December 30) that the free COVID-19 testing service will continue to be provided for eligible persons of targeted groups at community testing centres (CTCs).

In view of the ongoing severe situation of COVID-19 infection, particularly the latest Omicron mutant strain continuing to spread rapidly around the world, the Government will continue to implement the large-scale COVID-19 testing for groups of different risks, such that effective measures can be taken against the cases immediately to cut off transmission chains as quickly as possible. The testing of all targeted group persons (whether they have completed a vaccination course or not) must be done by using combined nasal and throat swabs collected by professionals, and the arrangement is applicable to all full-time and part-time staff of relevant industries.

To further guard against the risk of importation of cases, the Government has further stepped up the testing arrangement for groups of very high exposure risks since December 15. Airport staff of targeted groups of very high exposure risks (i.e. those working in Orange Zone handling flights to/from places outside the Mainland) are now required to get tested every two days, while working staff of quarantine centres/hotels, designated quarantine hotels (DQHs)/facilities (DQFs) and relevant designated transport need to get tested on a daily basis (those who have not yet completed a vaccination course) or every two days (those who have completed a vaccination course).

Furthermore, in accordance with the latest anti-epidemic measures announced by the Education Bureau, the testing requirement for school staff who have not yet taken the first dose of vaccine will be further tightened since next January. Eligible school staff can undergo free testing every three days at CTCs.

Persons of targeted groups eligible for receiving free COVID-19 testing at CTCs are mainly those who are vaccinated or those who are unfit for vaccination because of health reasons. They must present valid medical certificates/vaccination records/documents of identity proof (see Notes) for receiving free tests. This requirement is applicable to all targeted groups. In other words, persons of targeted groups will need to pay for the regular testing service if they do not fall under the category of being unfit for vaccination because of health reasons.

The specific requirements for eligible persons of various targeted groups (including testing frequency, specimen requirement, conditions for receiving free test) are set out in the Annex. Moreover, CTCs also provide free voluntary testing service for the following groups to safeguard their health and that of their families and co-workers, namely staff members of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes who are fully vaccinated (can receive a free test every seven days on a voluntary basis) and personnel working in markets, licensed hawkers and fully vaccinated practitioners working at Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (can receive a free test every 28 days on a voluntary basis).

Persons of targeted groups have to make bookings online (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en) for receiving the free testing service at CTCs. Those who have no appointment or do not meet the eligibility/conditions will need to pay for the testing service at a cost of \$240. The free testing arrangement will be available until the end of next January.

The Government regularly reviews the coverage and frequency of targeted group testing and if such testing should be publicly funded based on the latest epidemic risk assessment. A spokesman for the FHB said that the provision of free tests for targeted groups involves the use of public resources. Given that the Government must uphold the principle of effective use of resources, public money should only be used to subsidise individual eligible persons for taking nucleic acid tests in very exceptional situations.

The spokesman reiterated that the two vaccines currently recognised in Hong Kong are safe and effective, giving protection to the vaccinated persons and those around them. The vaccines have been received by billions of people worldwide and getting vaccination is the best way to fight the virus. Except for those with contraindications, most people are fit for vaccination. Currently, all Hong Kong residents aged 12 or above are eligible for receiving free vaccination. The Government calls on the public to treasure the vaccine supply in Hong Kong and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Notes:

- (i) Persons who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of health reasons are required to present a relevant medical certificate;
- (ii) persons who are vaccinated (i.e. have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, or received the second dose but have not yet passed 14

days, or completed a vaccination course of two doses) should present a relevant vaccination record (such as by downloading their electronic vaccination records or saving the printouts of their vaccination records to their mobile phones, or bringing along the printouts or copies of their vaccination records); and
(iii) certain groups should also present card/letter/document proof issued by relevant organisations for verification of identity.

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Transcript of remarks by CE at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session this morning (December 30) to review the work in 2021:

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs Lam. Two questions. The FCC (Foreign Correspondents' Club) and the EU's external affairs division called the Police action against Stand News "a further blow to press freedom in Hong Kong". What's your take on that? And second one, what do you make of their comments that the Police action will continue to chill the media environment in the city? Thank you.

Chief Executive: As I have responded to a question in Cantonese, as usual I will not comment on the details of a case undertaken by a law enforcement agency, especially one which will shortly go into the judicial proceedings. I'm not going to comment on the case but I would outline, in response to your questions, a couple of principles, and these are very important principles that I have repeatedly mentioned in response to similar concerns in the past two years.

One is Hong Kong is very proud of being a place where there is strong rule of law, and this underlines Hong Kong's success as an international financial and business centre. As a place which is proud of the rule of law, of course we have to use legislation where there are obvious breaches, offences under the relevant legislation. What the law enforcement agencies have done, including the Police, in arresting people who are suspicious of committing offences under the Crimes Ordinance or the National Security Law, is their legitimate duty. They are doing this in accordance with the law, with the evidence they have collated and the investigations that they have done and I believe also with some legal advice.

Following the Police investigation, the case will then be passed to the Department of Justice to decide in an independent way whether prosecutions should be laid, and ultimately the case, the prosecution will go to the courts, and we all understand and appreciate that there is judicial independence in Hong Kong and the judges will decide on the cases in an independent manner without any interference, simply based on the law and based on the evidence put in front of them. These actions are law enforcement actions. These actions have nothing to do with so-called suppression of press freedom or suppression of democracy, as some will put it. I would say that

nobody should associate law enforcement actions by the Police department with the freedom of the press.

I just read something. There was a statement issued by the Secretary of State of the United States and again they, sort of, made all sorts of allegations and accusations about this incident. There was this very short phrase in the statement, it said that "Journalism is not sedition." Well I agree with that – journalism is not sedition. But seditious acts and activities and inciting other people through public acts and activities could not be condoned under the guise of news reporting. It should be very clear what is reporting of news, and what is seditious acts or activities to undermine national security.

That was my response to the recent incident, and I believe that people by now should realise that it is so very important to adhere to the rule of law in Hong Kong, to make sure that offences are being taken very seriously because we have all suffered as a result of a lot of non-law-abiding activities in the latter half of 2019 and nobody in Hong Kong want to see that happening again. Thank you.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, over the past year, opposition figures were arrested under the National Security Law, civil groups disbanded one after another, there was a new electoral system implemented in Hong Kong, and some Hong Kong people also left Hong Kong to other countries. How would you assess Hong Kong being a better place to live in and work now when compared to 2017 when you first took office? And, secondly, you also said in your PowerPoint just now that you will begin a public consultation on Article 23. How likely do you think the law can be passed before your term ends? Thank you.

Chief Executive: If you ask me, I think Hong Kong in 2021 is now in a much better state than when I took office in July 2017. One, fundamentally, is because we are now back on the right track of "One Country, Two Systems". And "One Country, Two Systems" being on the right track requires upholding the principle of "One Country", requires Hong Kong to safeguard national security, requires that a very important part of the political system, that is the Legislative Council (LegCo), comprises people who are patriotic. We're not suggesting that they could not criticise the Government or hold a different opinion on many of the things that we will put to LegCo, but they have to be patriotic. If members of the Legislative Council were not patriotic, they could use that occasion and furthermore to collude with foreign forces to subvert the Government of the Hong Kong SAR and the Central People's Government. So I think on that particular score, Hong Kong is now a much safer place, and I believe that with the support of the Central People's Government in all respects, particularly in integration with the Mainland development, in the 14th Five-Year Plan, in the Greater Bay Area, there are abundant opportunities in front of us for us to seize, which will help to improve Hong Kong's economy and improve people's livelihood. That is a very simple way to answer your question.

About enacting local legislation under Basic Law (BL) Article 23, this is our constitutional duty. We have not done it for over two decades. It is

time that we should do it, because while the National Security Law has been promulgated, implemented in Hong Kong for one and a half years, there are still other offences relating to national security that require a new local legislation. What I have said, of course in consultation with the Secretary for Security, who is doing all the preparatory work, is to commence the public consultation within my term, and that is in the next six months we will start the consultation, laying out the details of the proposed amendments to the legislation and so on. I am not very optimistic that we could actually pass the law because that would require completing everything, that is public consultation, drafting of the bill, presenting the bill to Legislative Council, the setting up of the Bills Committee and the Bills Committee scrutinising the bill and maybe even conducting their own consultations and then clause-by-clause examination, and then second reading and third reading. Looking at the calendar and calculating the sittings, I just don't see how that could be accomplished. But I have heard some LegCo members-elect expressing the desire that they will co-operate in order to expedite the passing of the legislation. I certainly welcome that, but I would still adhere importance to a more thorough discussion in society before we enact the law. Let's see how we interact with the new Legislative Council to see how quickly we could put BL 23 into our law books. Thank you.

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