

# Financial regulators and advisory bodies to implement vaccination in lieu of regular testing arrangement

To have a strong defence against the COVID-19 virus and its mutant strains, the Government announced earlier that all government employees are subject to the vaccination in lieu of regular testing (VRT) arrangement. The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, today (August 25) said he was pleased to learn that financial regulators and advisory bodies have also taken the initiative to respond to the appeal by the Government to implement the VRT arrangement, for establishing a healthy working environment in order to allow the Hong Kong economy to resume normal operation gradually.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority implemented the VRT arrangement in early August. The Securities and Futures Commission, the Insurance Authority, the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority, the Financial Reporting Council and the Financial Services Development Council are also planning, according to their respective circumstances, to implement the VRT arrangements similar to that of the Government. Regardless of their duties, work nature and workplace, all employees who have not received their first dose of a vaccine are required to undergo nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 using combined nasal and throat swabs at community testing centres every two weeks.

Mr Hui said, "The financial regulators and advisory bodies can lead by example by encouraging their employees to receive vaccination by implementing the VRT arrangement. It can help enormously to build a strong defence against the COVID-19 virus and its mutant strains, and thus enable Hong Kong's economy to continue to recover."

The Hong Kong economy remained on track for recovery in the second quarter of 2021. Real Gross Domestic Product continued to grow notably by 7.6 per cent in the second quarter over the figure a year earlier.

Mr Hui added, "In fact, since the outbreak of the pandemic, Hong Kong has been by and large operating smoothly as an international financial centre and maintaining sustainable development."

Mr Hui said he expects that in addition to the employees of the financial regulators and advisory bodies, more and more people of the financial services industry will actively respond to the Early Vaccination for All campaign by receiving vaccines, so as to allow gradual resumption of normal activities in society as well as provide a more solid foundation for economic recovery.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme was launched in late February, and

the total number of doses of vaccines administered has surpassed 7 million as of last weekend.