

Government enforces “restriction-testing declaration” and compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Kennedy Town (with photo)

The Government yesterday (December 30) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 10pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Kennedy Town (i.e. Block A, Hoi Tao Building, 7-11 Belcher's Street, Kennedy Town) were 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. In addition, the Government had issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday to any person who had been present at the building for more than two hours from December 9 to December 30, 2021, to undergo compulsory testing on or before January 1, 2022 even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect. The Government finished the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.30am today (December 31) and is now carrying out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" to verify that all people in the "restricted area" have undergone compulsory testing. The Government will further announce the revocation time of the declaration.

Starting from around 7.30am today, persons in the "restricted area" in Kennedy Town who have undergone testing and are able to present SMS notifications with negative test results or wear wristbands as proof of having undergone testing may leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer.

The Government set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" yesterday and requested persons subject to compulsory testing to collect combined nasal and throat swab samples at the stations to undergo a COVID-19 virus test before 1.30am today. As at 1.30am today, around 195 residents had undergone testing. The test results of a small number of specimens are still undergoing the verification process. The test results of other persons subject to compulsory testing were negative.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit around 95 households, among which around 20 households did not answer the door. Those may include some households undergoing quarantine or isolation. Some units are possibly vacant as well. The Government does not have detailed information in this respect and will take measures to follow up.

The Government also understands that some residents already underwent testing at the mobile specimen collection stations set up in the district or by other means. Therefore, persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from December 28 to December 30, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again.

The Government reiterates that enforcement actions will be taken seriously. Any person who fails to present an SMS notification with a test result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone testing breaches the compulsory testing notice and may be liable to a fine of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him/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 may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

