

Government extends existing social distancing measures

In view of the dire epidemic situation in Hong Kong, the Government announced on February 22 the tightening of social distancing measures as well as on March 21 the outcome of the mid-term review including the decision to maintain the social distancing measures till April 20. The Government announced today (March 23) the gazettal of extending existing social distancing measures in accordance with the public health emergency regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance, with the next 14-day cycle to be effective from March 24 to April 6.

For catering premises and scheduled premises regulated under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), the existing social distancing measures will be extended for two weeks. Other existing measures, such as allowing no more than two persons per group gathering in a public place, prohibition of multi-household gatherings at private premises involving more than two households, the mask-wearing requirement and cessation of mass events to avoid group gatherings, will continue to be implemented.

Specific measures (see details of the restrictions under Cap. 599F in Annex 1) to be in force during the period from March 24 to April 6 include:

(I) Catering business

(1) From 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day, save for specific premises (see details in Annex 2), a person responsible for carrying on a catering business must continue to cease selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises of the business, and close any premises or part of the premises (whichever is applicable) on which food or drink is sold or supplied by the business for consumption on the premises. The premises concerned may still sell or supply food and/or drink for takeaway services and deliveries. A person responsible for carrying on a catering business is also required to put up a notice at the entrance to the catering premises to remind customers that food or drink should not be consumed in areas adjacent to the catering premises. All catering premises must continue to implement the Vaccine Pass arrangement, under which all persons entering catering premises must comply with the vaccination requirement save under exempted situations (see details in the [relevant press release on implementation arrangements for the Vaccine Pass](#)). The maximum number of persons per table is two, and no banquets will be allowed.

(2) Live performance and dancing activity is still not allowed in catering premises. Karaoke or mahjong-tin kau activity should also be suspended therein.

(3) Other requirements and restrictions on catering premises will continue to remain in force, including that all customers, when they are away from the

table, must not consume food or drink and must wear a mask, and they must scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code using the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application on their mobile phones/other mobile devices before entering the premises (excluding persons who only order takeaway).

(4) Bars or pubs will remain closed.

(II) Scheduled premises

(5) Except for club-houses, hotels or guesthouses and barber shops or hair salons, all scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F as listed below must continue to suspend operation:

- (a) Amusement game centres;
- (b) Bathhouses;
- (c) Fitness centres;
- (d) Places of amusement;
- (e) Places of public entertainment;
- (f) Premises (commonly known as party rooms) that are maintained or intended to be maintained for hire for holding social gatherings;
- (g) Beauty parlours;
- (h) Establishments (commonly known as clubs or nightclubs) that are open late into the night, usually for drinking, and dancing or other entertainment;
- (i) Karaoke establishments;
- (j) Mahjong-tin kau premises;
- (k) Massage establishments;
- (l) Sports premises;
- (m) Swimming pools;
- (n) Cruise ships (i.e. suspension of "cruise-to-nowhere" itineraries);
- (o) Event premises (except for wedding ceremonies subject to a headcount limit); and
- (p) Religious premises (except for funerals, or wedding ceremonies subject to a headcount limit).

(6) For club-houses and hotels or guesthouses, managers must continue to comply with the relevant restrictions under Cap. 599F, including implementation of the Vaccine Pass, closing the facilities therein that are being used or operated as premises mentioned in points (4) and (5) above, and the catering premises therein must comply with all applicable requirements, including that of suspension of dine-in service during dinnertime.

(7) For barber shops or hair salons, managers must continue to comply with the relevant restrictions under Cap. 599F, including implementation of the Vaccine Pass and ensuring customers use "LeaveHomeSafe". Staff members and customers alike must wear a mask at all times.

(8) For shopping malls, department stores, supermarkets and markets, the manager/person-in-charge must continue to comply with the relevant restrictions under Cap. 599F, including fulfilling the relevant requirements on "LeaveHomeSafe" and the Vaccine Pass under "passive checking".

(III) Mask-wearing requirement

(9) The mandatory mask-wearing requirement under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) will be extended during the period from March 24 to April 6. A person must wear a mask all the time when the person is boarding or on board a public transport carrier, is entering or present in an MTR paid area, or is entering or present in a specified public place (i.e. all indoor and outdoor public places).

(10) Under Cap. 599I, if a person does not wear a mask in accordance with the requirement, an authorised person may deny that person from boarding a public transport carrier or entering the area concerned, as well as require that person to wear a mask and disembark from the carrier or leave the said area. A person in contravention of the relevant provision commits an offence and the maximum penalty is a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). In addition, authorised public officers may issue penalty notices to persons who do not wear a mask in accordance with the requirement and such persons may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty at \$5,000.

(IV) Continued cessation of mass events to avoid group gatherings

(11) Unless exempted, group gatherings of more than two persons in public places will continue to be prohibited during the period from March 24 to April 6. The requirement is also applicable to group gatherings in catering business and scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F in which the relevant requirements or restrictions are not complied with.

(12) From March 24 to April 6, multi-household gatherings at private premises involving more than two households will continue to be prohibited.

(13) Any person who participates in a prohibited group gathering; organises a prohibited group gathering; owns, controls or operates the place of such a gathering; and knowingly allows the taking place of such gathering commits an offence under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who participate in a prohibited group gathering may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty at \$5,000.

A Government spokesman said, "As the epidemic situation of Hong Kong remains dire, it is necessary for the Government to maintain social distancing measures in order to protect public health. We call on citizens to stay vigilant to combat the ongoing epidemic together."