

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tuen Mun and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (February 6) 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 7.30pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tuen Mun (i.e. Leung Wai House, Leung King Estate, 31 Tin King Road, Tuen Mun) 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 January 24, 2022 to February 6, 2022 to undergo compulsory testing on or before February 8, 2022 even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect.

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 1am today (February 7). As at 1am today, around 1 920 people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing, among which three cases tested preliminarily positive were found. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will arrange to follow up.

As it takes time for the testing contractor to re-confirm cases tested positive preliminarily, it took longer than usual to reopen. The Yuen Long District Office had provided food packs for the residents. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.30pm today, the Government took enforcement action in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wore a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 9pm. Test records of around 450 persons subject to compulsory testing were checked. Nobody was found to have not undergone

compulsory testing. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Yuen Long District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health mobilised around 335 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification.

The Government reminds the about 190 households who have not answered the door to contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after reading the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will 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 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.