

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Yau Ma Tei and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice (with photo)

The Government yesterday (February 1) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 8.30pm yesterday, by which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Yau Ma Tei (i.e. 142-148 Reclamation Street and 59A, 59B, 59C Public Square Street, and 150-160 Reclamation Street and 2A, Wing Sing Lane) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present in the buildings for more than two hours from January 19 to February 1, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing before February 3. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 6.30am today (February 2) and carried out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended around noon today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD), the Yau Tsim Mong District Office, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Fire Services Department, the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Auxiliary Medical Service mobilised around 250 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including food packs (containing noodles, canned meat, canned fruit, canned soup, etc), instant noodles, pasta, bread, canned food, cup noodles, soup packs, cakes, soy milk and bottled water, etc, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks and hand sanitisers, etc, were also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

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. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at about 6.30am today, the Government took enforcement actions in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" have 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 around noon. About 16 persons were found not having undergone compulsory testing. A fixed penalty of \$5,000 and a compulsory testing order were issued to them. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

After initial investigation, it is believed that a few of the some 50 households who have not answered the door are vacant units or are used as a warehouse. The other residents are urged to contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, so as to eliminate the possible risk of a further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government understands that residents in the district are worried and anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases in recent days. The Government hopes that this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains in the district and ease residents' worries and fear, so that they will regain confidence in resuming social and business activities in the area, and return to a normal life.

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

The Government as a whole is united in fighting against the virus despite all the difficulties, and provided testing for all the residents in the district within a short period of time in the hope of achieving zero cases in the district.

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/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.

