

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Jordan

The Government has 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), by which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Jordan (i.e. an area bounded by Woosung Street to its east, Nanking Street to its south, Battery Street to its west and Kansu Street to its north. See Annex.) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the arrangement by the Government. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise within about 48 hours, in order to achieve the goal of zero cases in the district with concerted efforts.

The spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a restriction-testing declaration."

"The Government earlier undertook further action to strengthen 'compulsory testing on mandatory basis' and testing efforts in the 'Jordan specified area' (bounded by Nathan Road to its east, Jordan Road to its south, Ferry Street to its west and Kansu Street to its north). Buildings within the specified area would be covered by the compulsory testing notices if there is one confirmed case found in a unit, or where no confirmed case was found but the sewage samples were constantly tested positive. The 'core area' bounded by Temple Street to its east, Ning Po Street to its south, Reclamation Street to its west and Pak Hoi Street to its north was delineated, within which about 70 buildings in total were subject to compulsory testing regardless of whether confirmed cases were found.

"However, outbreaks in the district remained severe. From January 1 to 20, 2021, the 'Jordan specified area' recorded 162 confirmed cases, involving 56 buildings. Residents in the district are worried and some of them have misunderstanding towards the epidemic situation."

"In the past few days, the ratio of the sewage samples found in the buildings located in the 'restricted area' being constantly tested positive was higher than that of the other areas of the 'Jordan specified area', which implies possibly infected persons might be present at those places. At the same time, we are aware that those buildings in the 'restricted area' are relatively old and lack of maintenance, and many are 'three-nil buildings'. Sub-divided units are common and the infection risk in the community is quite

high. After risk assessment, we think it is necessary to issue a restriction-testing declaration for the 'restricted area' to break the transmission chain in the district and dispel the worries of residents in the district."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before midnight today (January 23). Persons subject to compulsory testing will be arranged to undergo nucleic acid test in batches at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons, including those in elderly homes in the district, or make arrangement for them to self-collect and submit the deep throat saliva specimen.

"We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements for adequate testing resources to carry out the testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results within 48 hours, with a view to allowing residents to start getting to work around 6am on January 25 (Monday). The Government will make public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the case when employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not to deduct the salary or benefit from the employees.

"In the past two weeks, more than 20 000 persons already underwent testing in the testing centres in Yau Ma Tei. The Government thanked those who complied with the compulsory testing notices and those who underwent testing voluntarily in a co-operative manner. However, persons who had undergone previous testing, including the testing under compulsory testing notices, before the declaration came into effect are still required to undergo testing again in order to break the transmission chain in the community completely."

In order to maintain public and emergency services within the "restricted area", the Government and relevant working staff (such as healthcare officers and other officers of the Hospital Authority, testing service providers engaged by the Government, cleaning service providers and staff members of residential care homes for the elderly etc.) are allowed to enter and leave the "restricted area" on condition that personal information and contacts are given, as well as certain infection control instructions are followed (including undergoing testing before leaving the "restricted area" without the need to wait for the test results).

The Government has prepared simple food and basic cleaning tools for the residents restricted by the declaration. The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2399 6949 and 2835 1473) and a dedicated hotline (Tel:

3755 6816) for the ethnic minorities. The hotline services will start operation from 6am today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government understands the residents in the district are worried and anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases in recent days. Under the epidemic, their livelihood is seriously affected as businesses in the area have been hit hard and brought to a standstill. The Government hopes this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains 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 Food and Health Bureau will also issue a compulsory testing notice covering all premises in the "restricted area". Any person who had been present in the "restricted area" for more than two hours in the past 14 days, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing during the same period of time (i.e. before midnight of today (January 23)).

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the result patiently at home. Any person who breaches the restriction-testing declaration commits an offence and may be liable to a maximum fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.