

Government enforces “restriction-testing declaration” and compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Kwong Shung House, Kwong Fuk Estate, Tai Po

The Government yesterday (March 25) 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 3.30pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tai Po (i.e. Kwong Shung House, Kwong Fuk Estate, Tai Po, excluding social service units thereat) 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 issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday to any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from March 12 to March 25, 2022, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 27, 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 11am today (March 26) 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 11am today, persons in the specified "restricted area" in Tai Po 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 9pm yesterday. Around 1 530 people within the area had undergone testing, among which 51 cases tested positive were found. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will arrange to follow up.

Regarding cases tested positive in the specified "restricted area", the Government has provided additional food packs, health advice for persons tested positive pending admission to hospitals or isolation facilities, disinfection products and surgical masks to these persons and their household members pending follow-up arrangement.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit around 790 households within the "restricted area", among which 33 households did not answer the door. The Government will take measures to follow up.

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 \$10,000. 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.

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Houthi crimes highlighted at European Parliament

Fri, 2022-03-25 21:27

BRUSSELS: The international community has been urged to do more to tackle human rights violations committed by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

And speakers at a special conference on the issue also called for the militia group's leaders to be prosecuted in international courts for their war crimes.

Atrocities carried out by the Houthis against women and children were among a catalogue of incidents highlighted at the recent meeting in Brussels organized by the Group of the European People's Party in the European Parliament.

Guest speaker, Dr. Wesam Basindawa, head of the Yemeni Coalition of Independent Women, told members of the European Parliament and representatives of EU institutions about cases of physical and sexual violence toward women and children, the recruiting of children as soldiers, and brutal attacks against minorities.

She said the Houthis had obstructed the delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid and carried out cross-border terrorist attacks on civilian targets in neighboring Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The group had also turned schools and educational facilities into camps and weapons stores, breaching international humanitarian and human rights laws.

And she pointed out that religious and ethnic minorities in Yemen, such as the Jewish and Baha'i communities, had seen many of their rights and basic freedoms restricted by the Houthis.

Basindawa said: "We and the international community must do more work and put pressure on this terrorist militia, tighten sanctions against it, prosecute its leaders, and try them in international courts as war criminals."

MEP Isabella Tovaglieri, a member of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, said women were the worst-affected and most vulnerable category in conflict zones and needed to be protected against rape, kidnapping, forced marriage, and poverty.

"Europe should help women in peacebuilding and in conflict resolution," she added.

Addressing the conference, MEP Luisa Regimenti spoke about physical and psychological violence toward women and the importance of providing victim

support services.

Another MEP, Ryszard Czarnecki, said the Houthis had targeted civilians during attacks in Marib and at Al-Thwara hospital, adding that the group had set fire to an overcrowded detention center housing African refugees.

Also speaking at the conference was MEP and Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality member, Isabella Adinolfi. She noted the need to support female teachers, intellectuals, and journalists who were working to raise awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

MEP Gianna Gancia said the war in Yemen had created a critical situation for women and girls and that "from the beginning of the conflict seven years ago, the EU had made diplomatic efforts and provided financial support to Yemen through humanitarian assistance and development."

Alessandra Illuticini, president of Progetto Donna 2021, told delegates of the atrocities meted out toward women in Houthi-controlled areas such as the forced wearing of niqabs, child marriage, honor killings, and domestic violence.

She pointed out the need to work closely with the UN and human rights organizations to empower women and protect them as well as support their fight for rights.

MEP Lucia Vuolo said: "Yemen remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Conflict across Yemen continues to endanger civilians, trigger displacement, and damage civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools."

Simona Russo, coordinator of the Fight Impunity association, said the serious situation in Yemen was one "that we should not forget."

Program host, MEP Fulvio Martusciello, said he had been working for more than three years on raising awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

He and his European Parliament colleagues had written to Joseph Borrell, high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, calling for the Houthis to be designated as a terrorist group.

MEP Anna Cinzia Bonfrisco said: "We need to encourage women peacebuilders and help them establish a dialogue between the different parties in Yemen. Women should be active members of the peace negotiations in Yemen."

Closing the session, conference moderator, Manel Msalmi, said the EU as a peace actor should work closely with civil society organizations in Yemen to empower female leaders.



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Houthis under fire for ruining peace efforts to end war

[CHP investigates 1 124 confirmed and 1 091 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 2 308 cases pending status by nucleic acid tests as well](#)

as 9 545 cases tested positive by rapid antigen tests (with photo)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (March 21) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, March 21, the CHP was investigating 4 523 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (1 124 confirmed cases, 1 091 asymptomatic cases and 2 308 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 9 545 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RAT) (6 188 symptomatic cases and 3 357 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 696 606 and 365 152 cases that tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RAT respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of five imported cases and 4 518 locally acquired cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests, as well as 9 545 locally acquired cases tested positive by RAT. The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. A list of buildings related to the cases is available at the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

In addition, as of 0.00am, March 21, a total of 5 906 deaths that have been tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) was recorded, with 5 879 and 27 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 6 119 deaths that have been tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday (March 20), the total number of confirmed cases was 277 061, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases, pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 139 313, 10 and 275 699 respectively.

As a passenger flight (TK083) operated by Turkish Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Istanbul, Turkey, on March 20 had three passengers who tested positive upon arrival, the DH thus invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights in Hong Kong from Istanbul operated by Turkish Airlines from March 22 to April 4.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that the local situation of COVID-19 infection became severe recently and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility. With the higher transmissibility and risk of infection of the Omicron mutant strain, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with the social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings

(particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

The spokesman reminded that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who are yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected. Meanwhile, a person who gets COVID-19 and influenza at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. Influenza vaccination may reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. In addition, seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html).

