

Government makes "restriction-testing declaration" and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Block 4, Po Tin Estate, Tuen Mun

The Government today (March 18) 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 4pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tuen Mun (i.e. Block 4, Po Tin Estate, Tuen Mun, excluding unit 8 on G/F. See Annex.) are 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. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about noon tomorrow (March 19). The operation may be extended depending on test results.

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As the sewage discharged from the above building was tested positive for COVID-19, it is suspected that there are asymptomatic patients in the building. Given the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 9pm today. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test 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 make arrangement to facilitate specimen collection for people with impaired mobility. All persons in the "restricted area" who were tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus on or after December 31, 2021, will not be required to undergo testing in this compulsory testing exercise.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out 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, and finish the

exercise at around noon tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

According to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any persons other than those specified above who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from March 5 to March 18, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before March 20, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$10,000. The person would 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

[Post-1990 electronic gazette copies available on Hong Kong e-Legislation](#)

The Department of Justice (DoJ) has implemented a project to back capture printed gazettes published before 2000 to facilitate the access to as-made legislation. Over 7 500 electronic copies of Legal Supplements and selected Supplements to the Hong Kong Government Gazette published between 1990 to 1999 are now included in the Hong Kong e-Legislation (HKEL) for public access.

The e-gazette database under the HKEL covers Legal Supplements No. 1 (Ordinances), No. 2 (Subsidiary Legislation, etc), No. 3 (Bills) and No. 7

(Authentic Chinese Texts) as well as Supplement No. 6 (Private Bills only). Users can obtain and download their electronic copies through www.elegislation.gov.hk/gazette. In addition, the electronic copies are also accessible through hyperlinks under the enactment history of a chapter and under the source notes of individual provisions when viewing legislation under the HKEL.

The initiative is to make research into pre-2000 gazettes more convenient, as previously they are only available in printed version and are only accessible in the Hong Kong Central Library.

"It is hoped that the expanded e-gazette database would facilitate academic, legal and policy researches," a DoJ spokesperson said today (March 18).

The DoJ will continue to implement the project by phases to cover further past gazettes published before 1990 in the forthcoming years.

Government announces latest situation of fresh food supply from Mainland

A Government spokesman announced today (March 18) that the supply of fresh food from the Mainland yesterday (March 17) was stable.

According to the latest information, the quantity of vegetables supplied from the Mainland to Hong Kong yesterday (as of midnight) by land and water transportation was over 2 300 tonnes, comparable to the average daily supply from the Mainland on a normal day. The volume of vegetables supplied from the Mainland to Hong Kong sold through the wholesale markets of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Vegetable Marketing Organization yesterday was about 744 tonnes. The average wholesale prices per catty for choi sum and pak choi stood at \$11.50 and \$7.20 respectively. The supply of eggs to the wholesale market remained steady, with the average daily supply standing at about 3.2 million for the past week, largely comparable to the average daily supply on a normal day.

The total supply of chilled meat from the Mainland yesterday was about 51 tonnes which was comparable to the supply on a normal day. The supply of live pigs was abundant.

The supply of chilled poultry from the Mainland was over 130 000 head yesterday and over 9 500 live chickens were slaughtered locally. The supply was fairly stable.

Regarding the rice supply, in compliance with the requirement of the Government, stockholders of rice have to maintain the reserve stock of rice

at a level sufficient for consumption by the local population for 15 days. The trade generally stocks double the required amount, which is sufficient for one month's consumption by Hong Kong citizens. In recent years, the import and consumption of rice in Hong Kong has stood at a steady level of around 320 000 to 330 000 tonnes per year. The import quantity (including reserve stock) as of end-January 2022 was 30 400 tonnes. Suppliers also maintain a reserve for food that can be stored, such as frozen meat, for around three months' stock generally.

The Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities and major food suppliers to ensure a stable food supply.

The AFCD updates and publishes the fresh food supply information daily. Members of the public may visit the AFCD website for updates on daily supplies and wholesale prices of fresh food (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/agriculture/agr_fresh/agr_fresh.html).

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

The Government today (March 14) 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 4.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Wong Tai Sin (i.e. Wing Yuen House, Chuk Yuen (South) Estate, Wong Tai Sin, excluding elderly home and other social service units on G/F. See Annex.) are 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. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at around 1pm tomorrow (March 15). The operation may be extended depending on test results.

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As the sewage discharged from the above building was tested positive for COVID-19, it is suspected that there are asymptomatic patients in the building. Given the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 9pm today. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test 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 make arrangement to facilitate specimen collection for people with impaired mobility. All persons in the "restricted area" who were tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus on or after December 31, 2021 will not be required to undergo testing in this compulsory testing exercise.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out 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, and finish the exercise at around 1pm tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

According to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any persons other than those specified above who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from March 1 to March 14, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before March 16, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

The Government will provide food packs and necessity packs for persons subject to compulsory testing, so as to facilitate the meal arrangements and daily needs of some persons subject to compulsory testing. In addition, the Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 4.30pm 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 appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply

with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$10,000. The person would 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

[Gulf to play key role as EU plans to cut Russian gas imports, says envoy](#)

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RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states will have an important role as the EU plans to cut Russian gas imports by two-thirds before the end of the year, said the EU ambassador to the Kingdom.

Speaking to reporters in Riyadh, Patrick Simonnet said that the EU has proposed a new plan to reduce its dependence on Russian energy amid Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states would play a key role as energy partners.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the EU, has proposed to reduce its purchases of Russian gas by two-thirds by the end of the year, and cease buying fossil fuels from Russia before 2030.

In a reply to Arab News, the envoy said that this would be achieved by diversifying suppliers, which includes energy partners in the Gulf, and by increasing renewable hydrogen production and improving energy efficiency in households.

The EU seeks to increase imports of green hydrogen from Saudi Arabia, which is one of the largest producers in the world, he said.

Saudi Arabia aims to produce 4 million tons of hydrogen by 2030.

The EU envoy said: "There are discussions and negotiations to import natural gas from the Gulf countries, led by Saudi Arabia, which has entered into the gas production strongly during the recent period and has launched many projects in this sector."

He said there is a new plan to change energy providers in general, especially renewable energy and hydrogen gas.

"We need to discuss with Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries how far we can redirect our gas imports," he said.

“The plan of Europe is also not only to continue importing gas from other sources but to invest in and import renewable energy.”

During the press conference at the EU office in Riyadh, the envoy noted that the EU has a very close relationship with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, stressing the need to further expand relationships in all fields and work to further enhance the partnership.

The envoy said that to enhance cooperation with the Gulf countries, a special cooperation strategy has been developed between the countries of the region that will enter into effective implementation at the beginning of January 2023, based on the recommendations of the meeting of foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries with their counterparts from the EU countries.

“Pillars have been laid in various sectors, most notably commercial investments, tourism and energy, achieving security and stability in the region, as well as offering solutions to climate change problems and supporting the initiatives put forward, foremost of which is the Middle East Green Initiative, which was proposed by Saudi Arabia.”

Simonnet noted that an important basis for further expanding close ties is the Saudi support for humanitarian relief, as the Kingdom represents a living and active example in this, especially in Yemen, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Commenting on the resumption of free trade negotiations between the EU and the Gulf states, he said: “There are great moves towards restarting negotiations in the near future, after studying technical issues that are being worked on, paving the way for the two parties to sit back at the negotiating table, after a ministerial meeting was recently held in Brussels on this issue.”

Without specifying a timeframe for the start of negotiations, the envoy affirmed that the two sides have a strong desire to resume free trade negotiations.

Citing the latest statistics, Simonnet said that the EU is Saudi Arabia’s one of the largest trading partners, with about €40 billion (\$44 billion) trade in 2020, stressing that European companies aspire to increase their investments in all diversified economic and commercial sectors.





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