**Taipei City Government COVID-19 Prevention**

**Virtual Conference for Foreign Offices and Foreign Businesses**

Topic: **Taipei City Epidemic Prevention Policies and Relief Measures**

Time: **Wednesday, June 9, 2021** **at 16:00**

Meeting Lead: Commissioner Tom Chou, Mayor’s Office of External Affairs & Commissioner of Department of Civil Servant Development

Attending Representatives: Deputy Chief Superintendent Chia-Chen Hsu, Taipei City Hospital; Deputy Commissioner Hsiao-Lan Hu, Taipei City Government Department of Finance; Deputy Commissioner Hsin-Pei Wu, Taipei City Government Department of Economic Development; Deputy Executive Director Adam Yi, & Senior Policy Researcher Julianne Chen, Taipei City Government Mayor’s Office of External Affairs

1. **Opening Remarks**
2. Community transmission of COVID-19 within Taiwan this month has caused confirmed cases to increase into 10,000 range, with domestic cases now numbering more than imported cases from overseas. Taipei City is now facing the following challenges:
3. Medical capacity overburdened
	1. Policies implemented: additional upgraded specialized quarantine hotels, request for assistance from previously-retired medical workers, multiple COVID-19 patients placed within each treatment room.
4. Unknown sources of infection
5. Policies implemented: set up multiple rapid testing sites in and around infection hotspots, increased speed of PCR testing, mobile rapid testing team, sharing data with the public (ie. data maps of infection hotspots that allow Taipei City residents to see high-risk areas).
6. Economy and public well-being severely affected
	1. Policies implemented: 9 Temporary Relief Measures (also open to foreigners in Taipei City), model of strict management instead of complete shutdown during Level 3 (allows many industries to stay in business), digitization of industry (increases Taipei City’s competitiveness for post-pandemic era).
7. Under Level 3 restrictions, newly confirmed cases and the positive rate at testing sites have begun to decrease. However, we cannot loosen up epidemic prevention measures too soon. Taipei City is choosing to combat the epidemic using the most cost-efficient methods, until the start of mass vaccinations for the public.
8. **Taipei City’s 9 Temporary Relief Measures**
	* 1. Deputy Commissioner Hsiao-Lan Hu, Department of Finance, presents on the 9 Temporary Relief Measures: Tax Deferral, Tax Reduction, Rent Reduction, Free Rent, Rent Deferral, Preferential Interest, Subsidies, Enterprise Financing, Labor Relief (implemented from May to July, foreigners also eligible).
9. Foreign businesses in Taipei:
	1. Tax Deferral: businesses with a decrease of at least 15% in revenue eligible to defer tax payments for 12 months or split into 36 installments (including house, amusement, license and land value taxes); landlords required to reduce rents by 15%.
	2. Tax Reduction: house tax for closed/indoor-use-prohibited businesses decreased from 3% to 2%; license tax payment exempted; amusement tax rate reduced by 50% or exemption from payment for closed businesses.
	3. Rent Reduction (for city-owned real estate): half-rent reduction applies to current user of the real estate.
	4. Rent Exemption (for city-owned real estate): closed businesses exempt from rent payments; hot springs businesses exempt from usage fees.
	5. Rent Deferral (for city-owned real estate): businesses with a decrease of at least 15% in revenue eligible for 12-month extension for rent payments.
	6. Subsidies: art and culture project subsidy up to 300,000NTD per project; public art proposal up to 2.5 million NTD.
	7. Enterprise Financing: enterprises legally established for at least 1 year (overseas businesses with Taiwan branch not eligible); Head of Enterprise (must be a foreigner) shall provide foreign passport and documentation and add a Taiwanese guarantor; small and medium-sized enterprise loans will have 0.92% low rate for first 6 months and can apply for loans of up to 1.2 million NTD.
	8. Labor Relief: up to 3.5 million NTD; career training and re-training will be provided.
10. Foreigners in Taipei:
	* + - 1. Tax Deferral: defer tax payments for 12 months or split into 36 installments (including house, entertainment, license and land value taxes); for persons eligible for Central Government’s relief measures, landlord must reduce rent by 15%; for confirmed cases under home isolation/quarantine, house tax payments can be deferred until June 2021.
				2. Tax Reduction: house tax for closed/indoor-use-prohibited businesses decreased from 3% to 2%; license tax payment exempted; amusement tax rate reduced by 50% or exemption from payment for closed businesses
				3. Preferential Interest: mortgage interest rate is reduced by 50% for persons eligible for Central Government’s relief measures and hold Taiwan residence visa.
				4. Subsidies: compensation for quarantine facilities or quarantine hotels costs of up to 1,000 NTD a day, eligible for those who hold Taiwan residence visa; public art proposal subsidy up to 2.5 million NTD.
				5. Labor Relief: unemployment benefits can be received for 6 to 9 months and will be 60% of the average monthly insured salary in the 6 months before the termination of employment; Employment Security Plan, up to 10,900 NTD; Temporary Employment Security Plan will have 736 job vacancies (with rolling updates), with pay of up to to 12,800 NTD per month; education subsidies for children of
				6. unemployed parents, with up to 12,000 NTD for high school students and up to 26,000 NTD for junior college/university students; Recharge and Restart training program, up to 19,200 NTD.
				7. Rent Deferral (for city-owned real estate): 12-month extension for rent payments for persons eligible for Central Government’s relief measures.
				8. Rent Reduction (for city-owned real estate): reduce rent by 20% for persons eligible for Central Government’s relief measures.
11. Deputy Commissioner Hsin-Pei Wu, Department of Economic Development, explains Enterprise Financing.
12. Requirements for Enterprise Financing: must be a company that has been legally established for at least one year (Taiwan branch offices of foreign corporations not eligible); if person in charge is a foreigner, must provide a foreign passport and Taiwan residence visa and select a Taiwanese guarantor
13. Application period is from now until November 15, 2021.
14. Loan plan is divided into SME Loan and SME Easy Loan. The SME Loan has a limit of up to $4 million NTD. The interest rate for the SME Loan is 0.92% for the first 6 months of the loan plan and then 2.17% after the first 6 months. The SME Easy Loan has a limit of up to $1.2 million NTD, with a simple and fast application process. The SME Easy Loan has a 3-month grace period for interest-only repayment, and a 0.92% interest rate for the first 6 months.
15. **Q&A Session**
16. **Following Mayor Ko’s announcement of the 5/30 military simulation, does that mean Taipei City will be on lockdown?**

Actually, Taiwan as a whole has the epidemic situation under control. As a result, Taipei City Government and Central Government have both expressed that there is not a strong likelihood of entering Level 4. Nevertheless, we must be prepared for the worst-case scenario.

1. **With a Level 4 alert, can we continue to work despite a lockdown? If not, will this decision apply to foreign missions, since foreign embassies will need to continue to provide consular services? If foreign missions are exempt, could you please provide documentation that grants this exemption? Additionally, will we be allowed to go outside (e.g., to buy food, walk the dog, etc.)?**

Regarding whether consular services may be permitted to continue under Level 4, Commissioner Chou has already reached out to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who will be in contact with the CECC to discuss this issue. Once the CECC has finalized their response they will respond to Taipei City Government. Even under Level 4, Taipei residents will be allowed to leave their residences for essential purchases.

1. **How are vaccines distributed in Taipei City? What is the priority order for disadvantaged populations?**

In accordance with the 2021 COVID-10 Vaccination Plan as set by the Department of Health, vaccination eligibility and priority are determined by experts from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), to be subject to change according to the domestic epidemic situation, vaccine supply, and vaccine usage. At this stage, to ensure the safety of first responders, epidemic prevention workers, and high-risk groups at risk of severe illness or death, we have aimed to complete vaccinations for these groups as soon as possible. The general principle is to focus on government-subsidized vaccination groups.

1. **Can we choose the type of vaccine we receive？**

The COVID-19 vaccine is a precious resource. CECC will arrange for eligible candidates to receive the vaccine. If you have doubts about the current available vaccines, you may choose to not receive a vaccination for the time being. However, we are currently unable to determine the arrival time and quantity of vaccine shipments, which may delay the future administration of vaccines.

1. **Mayor Ko previously mentioned prioritizing medical workers and first responders for vaccinations, how does Taipei City Government plan to ensure the safety of these workers?**

The Department of Health continues to provide central and local government first responders with vaccinations. As of June 7, 2021, there have been a total of 15,936 vaccinated persons among this group.

1. **What is the procedure for treating foreigners with PCR test positive results? How will Taipei City determine whether a confirmed patient should stay in home isolation, an upgraded specialized quarantine hotel, or a hospital?**
2. It will be determined according to the procedures for relocation and ending quarantine, as set by Taipei City Hospitals/collective quarantine facilities and upgraded specialized quarantine hospitals on June 7, 2021.
3. When hospital/rapid testing site results are positive, cases will be handled according to severity of symptoms and the following principles:
	1. Mild symptoms/asymptomatic patients will be admitted to collective quarantine facilities/upgraded specialized quarantine hotels
	2. Severe symptoms/patients with acute issues will be admitted to the hospital for treatment
4. **Are the current requirements for home isolation one person per household or one person per room?**

During the home-isolation period, one person per room is the requirement. If there are persons self-isolating in your residence or you have friends/family who are under self-isolation, those residing in the same residence must follow daily procedures for epidemic prevention such as wearing masks, observing respiratory hygiene, washing hands frequently, maintaining good hygiene practices, maintaining social distancing, and not eating together.

1. **Currently, because of the limited medical capacity of the PCR test centers, foreigners in Taiwan who need to travel abroad cannot receive PCR test results quickly. What will Taipei City do in response?**

Taipei City Hospitals provide PCR tests in two different situations: regular and emergency. For regular situations, PCR test results will be released during a time period ranging from 4 hours to 2 days. For emergency situations, you may contact Taiwan Landseed Hospital in TaoNTD, which can provide PCR test results in 3 hours.

1. **Does Taipei City allow companies to conduct rapid testing for their employees?**

Companies are allowed to implement their own health monitoring and risk control measures and conduct weekly tests or targeted tests for high-risk personnel. Rapid testing will be carried out at the company’s expense and will require medical personnel to administer the tests. Due to the possibility of false positives or false negatives during the rapid testing process, when companies implement rapid testing and receive positive results, reporting of results and additional PCR testing must be carried out in accordance with the regulations. Companies must also provide places for self-isolation. Taipei City Government requires that persons with PCR test positive results are not allowed to self-isolate at home and must be relocated to hospitals, collective quarantine facilities, or upgraded specialized quarantine hotels. If rapid testing turns up a negative result, self-monitoring of symptoms will still be required.

1. **Some foreigners have already received their first vaccine dose, but their appointments for the second dose were cancelled due to a vaccine shortage. In that case, can they still receive a second dose?**

The goal at this current stage is to provide the first vaccination dose to first responders, epidemic prevention workers, and high-risk groups at risk of severe illness or death in order to ensure their safety. Once we receive a more stable supply of vaccine doses, we can then arrange for other vaccinations. The recommended interval for the second dose is 8 to 12 weeks after the first dose.

1. **What are the views of Taipei City Government on the side effects of the vaccine?**
2. The COVID-19 vaccine is a very new vaccine. According to clinical trial data, the chance of side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is higher than the chance of side effects after receiving other conventional vaccines currently in use.
3. But after considering the general immunity and prevention of serious illness that is produced after vaccination, the COVID-19 vaccine is still the best epidemic prevention measure at present.
4. In case of adverse reactions after vaccination, health personnel will follow up and provide relevant care. If long-term, negative physical symptoms occur after vaccination and a correlation is suspected, Taiwan has an established vaccination victim relief system that you may apply for, to fully determine whether your long-term symptoms were caused by the vaccine.
5. **What is the view of Taipei City Government on mixing vaccine doses from different brands? Under what circumstances is the AstraZeneca vaccine not recommended?**
6. COVID-19 vaccines have been given emergency use authorization. To ensure safe usage, it is currently not recommended to mix vaccine brands. Although other countries are conducting research on the mixing of vaccine brands, more evidence is still needed. If CECC has new vaccine policies, they will be published for all local governments across the country to follow.
7. Vaccinations not recommended for:
8. Persons who have a fever or acute moderate/severe illness should wait until conditions stabilize before vaccination, in order to prevent a confusion between existing fever symptoms and any adverse reactions toward the vaccine.
9. Persons who use anti-platelet or anti-coagulant drugs or have abnormal blood coagulation function/anemia should apply pressure on the injection site for at least 2 minutes and observe whether there is continued bleeding or hematoma.
10. The AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine may be associated with a very rare blood clot syndrome after injection. Please consult your doctor before vaccination to assess the related risks.
11. Persons who have previously had blood clots, thrombosis syndrome, or heparin induced thrombocytopenia in the past should avoid vaccination.
12. **As there are currently several types of vaccines in Taiwan, including the domestic vaccine, will there be an internationally recognized vaccination certificate? If the vaccine is not internationally recognized, it might affect recipients’ ability to travel abroad in the future.**

Currently, after vaccination with AstraZeneca, a vaccination certificate is provided and international certification can thus be obtained. The domestic vaccine is currently still in Phase II of clinical trials, so we are still waiting to see if it will be able to obtain international certification.

1. **What is the current medical capacity of Taipei City? Do hospitals still have sufficient medical capacity for non-COVID-19 patients?**

During the explosion of domestic cases in mid-May, Taipei City’s hospitals were unable to fully accommodate all COVID-19 patients with serious illness, particularly on the days of May 24 and 25. Fortunately, we implemented very effective contingency measures and increased the amount of patient beds in Taipei City to around 3,000. Now, we can not only accommodate COVID-19 patients within Taipei City, we can also provide medical capacity to other counties and cities as well.

1. **Is there an English version of TaipeiPASS?**

The English version of TaipeiPASS is already under development and is estimated to be rolled out by the end of June.

1. **Ordering takeout does not require entering the store or restaurant. Therefore, why is contact tracing necessary in this case?**

Although you do not need to enter a restaurant to pick up takeout meals, there is still a risk of infection. Therefore, please comply with the current contact tracing system in order to assist with epidemic prevention.

1. **Does Taipei City recommend its residents wear protective goggles in addition to masks?**

This is up to you. It is great if you wish to wear protective googles, but it is not a required Taipei City policy.

1. **Foreign nationals are being charged different rates for the self-paid PCR tests, usually $2,000 NTD or more per test than local residents.**

Yes, we understand there is a significant price difference and we will try to find a method to solve this problem.

1. **What is the division of responsibility between CECC/Taipei City Government on announced measures? For example: the CECC has announced shopping restrictions at traditional markets, but Taipei City has taken it further and applied it to supermarkets.**

Currently, markets, supermarkets, public retail markets, megastores are subject to mandatory crowd control on the weekend. We hope to not enforce crowd control on weekdays. During the weekend, Taipei City will send personnel to markets to check ID numbers.

1. **What are the requirements that need to be met in order to host business events with more than 100 people? 0 local cases for how many days or weeks? Percentage of people vaccinated?**

This is difficult to answer as we are trying to not have group gatherings. For now, the reality is that when a large group gathers together, we can tell for certain that there will be an epidemic prevention problem.

1. **Are NGOs also eligible for the SME grants and loans on offer through the 9 Temporary Relief Measures?**

Only registered companies may apply for Enterprise Financing so NGOs are not eligible.

1. **Foreign officials do not have ARC numbers, can we utilize the AC numbers on our Ministry of Foreign Affairs cards to determine the days when we can go to the supermarkets?**

We have discussed this issue with the Department of Economic Development this morning and are currently in the process of resolving this issue.

1. **What is the timeline on when we will have an answer on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs card issue? Many businesses are not familiar with this card.**

Markets are currently undergoing training with regards to this.

1. **During the distribution of Taipei City Government financial assistance in 2020, many of the store tenants in shopping malls (i.e. Taipei 101) were not able to take advantage of any of the relief made available, with the relief instead being pocketed by the landlords and not the store tenants. This time, we hope that Taipei City Government will take measures to ensure that the relief is paid out directly to those that really need it, namely the stores in the shopping malls.**

Taipei 101 is actually owned by Taipei City, which is why we provided rent relief at that time. During this round of rent relief measures, we ask that Taipei 101 provide reasonable rent accommodations/reductions to store tenants.

End of Meeting: 17:15