

CS inspects Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, inspected Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre on Lantau Island this evening (December 29) to learn about its latest operations.

Accompanied by the Director of Architectural Services, Ms Winnie Ho; the Chief Staff Officer of the Civil Aid Service (CAS), Mr Francis Fong; and the Department of Health (DH)'s Consultant (Family Medicine) in charge, Dr Cecilia Fan, Mr Cheung was briefed by CAS members and DH staff on the daily operation of the centre and the transfer arrangement for persons under quarantine. The daily operation of quarantine centres is managed by the CAS and the DH is responsible for the medical services at the medical post on-site.

Mr Cheung thanked in particular the CAS members and the DH staff for their dedication and effort in providing the necessary supplies and appropriate support to the persons subject to quarantine. He appealed to colleagues of relevant government departments to enhance communication and stay alert to the situation with a view to ensuring the smooth operation of the centre.

Mr Cheung noted that the Architectural Services Department immediately arranged a contractor to conduct urgent clearing of trash found in manhole after sewer blockage was reported last night. He expressed appreciation to colleagues of the department and contractors for working together in successfully increasing the number of quarantine units in Hong Kong within the shortest period of time.

Mr Cheung pointed out that quarantine and isolation of close contacts and persons with infection risks plays a vital role in the containment of the epidemic. The severe epidemic situation at present could place certain pressure on the demand for quarantine facilities. The Government will closely monitor the use of various quarantine facilities and make timely adjustments.

Constructed in four phases, the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre is now fully in use and provides a total of 3 500 units. Together with the Junior Police Call Permanent Activity Centre at Pat Heung, the Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village and the Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre, about 4 150 units in total are available in the quarantine centres across the territory. In addition, the Government has arranged for four hotels, namely Silka Tsuen Wan, Dorsett Kwun Tong, Silka Seaview in Yau Ma Tei and the Rambler Garden Hotel in Tsing Yi, to operate as designated quarantine hotels for close contacts of COVID-19 confirmed cases, altogether providing more than 1 700 rooms. In total, there are currently nearly 6 000 quarantine units to cope with the demand stemming from the epidemic.

As at 11am today, the usage rate of various quarantine facilities across the territory was about 30 per cent (about 1 700 units) and over 3 200 units are ready to be used (the remaining units are under maintenance or disinfection), reflecting that the facilities are still sufficient.

The DH's Quarantine Centre Task Force has all along been proactively following up on the arrangement of transferring close contacts to quarantine centres for mandatory quarantine. The Task Force has deployed additional manpower, with the number of staff members increased from 31 to 54, and will further increase the figure to almost 70 in the future, with a view to getting in touch with the close contacts concerned within 24 hours after a quarantine order is issued and arranging for designated vehicles to transfer them to quarantine centres for quarantine.

Mr Cheung reiterated that the Government attaches great importance to the quarantine arrangements for close contacts, and the DH will continue to work closely with related government departments to ensure the smooth transfer of close contacts to quarantine centres.

During the inspection, Mr Cheung also thanked officers of the Hong Kong Police Force and the Fire Services Department stationing on-site for standing fast at their posts in keeping the centre safe and responding to unforeseen incidents.

CHP investigates 53 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 29, the CHP was investigating 53 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 8 725 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 8 724 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, three are imported cases.

A total of 1 048 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (December 15 to 28), including 970 local cases of which 363 are from unknown sources.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited the specified venues

under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid test according to the compulsory testing notice. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop.

Regarding the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;

- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
 - Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
 - After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
 - Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
 - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
 - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
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Correctional officers found person in custody suspected to have violated National Security Law

Correctional officers at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre recently received intelligence that a remand person in custody attempted to disseminate the message of "Hong Kong independence" inside the institution, suspected to have violated of the National Security Law. The institution management immediately monitored the target person in custody and locations.

Correctional officers launched an operation this morning (December 29) to search the person in custody and his cell and found wording suspected of advocating "Hong Kong independence" on the wall of the cell. The institution management immediately put the person in custody under separation for investigation.

The CSD has reported the case to the Police for follow-up.

The CSD emphasised that to ensure a safe and secure custodial environment, any persons in custody found to have committed illegal acts such as disseminating the message of "Hong Kong independence" will be handled seriously with zero tolerance.

The person in custody was remanded for the offence of incitement to secession in November 2020.

SDEV speaks to media on quarterly land sale programme for January to March 2021

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, at a media session today (December 29) on the quarterly land sale programme for January to March 2021:

Reporter: Firstly, about the annual target for private residential flat, you said you are confident we are getting closer to the target, but would you worry that the tender could be rejected in the coming quarter considering economic downturn? Secondly, for the year, the revenue from the land sale is actually lower than last year. Looking forward to 2021, do you think we can have a rebound? Can I also ask a little bit about the Sham Shui Po century-old reservoir? Does the Government think it needs to be declared as a monument and do you have any idea on how it needs to be preserved?

Secretary for Development: On the site at Bishop Hill, I think what we should now do is to await the evaluation by the experts who would then report to the AAB (Antiquities Advisory Board). The AAB will give a grading. Going forward, the Government will then consider what exactly to do with the site, having regard to AAB's recommendation.

In terms of overall direction, we do have a stance. We believe the site should be preserved. It should not be further demolished, and what has been demolished should be restored. And then, we should find a purpose for the site, which not only reflects the historic value of the site but should also be able to further the enjoyment of the people of Sham Shui Po and of Hong Kong.

There are many examples of success in the past. An example is our R-Scheme, the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme, which we are able to preserve the building, the structure or the site and at the same time allow the public to have reasonable access to the site and enjoy the site. That will be the direction going forward. Exactly what to do will have to be determined having regard to the recommendation of the AAB, on that I do not wish to speculate.

Your question about the overall target, every year we take all sources of supply in the whole, and then we will come up with a figure which we hope can be as close or exceed the target as possible. For this year, at this moment where we are standing now, we are over 99 per cent completion of the target. We are not yet there. We are 30 units short of the target. Whether we can have those 30 units in the coming two months is something I do not wish to speculate but let's see what the market does.

On the revenue side, there are land parcels to be sold in the coming quarter which will go into the figures for the entire financial year. That is something which will be announced in the financial budget, again I do not wish to speculate on that at this point in time.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Opening remarks by SDEV on land sale programme for January to March 2021

Following is the transcript of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, at a media session today (December 29) on the land sale programme for January to March 2021:

In the fourth quarter, the Government will sell by tender three residential sites, one each at the Peak, Kai Tak and Kwu Tung North New Development Area. Together, these sites are capable of providing about 2 240 flats.

The site on Mansfield Road at the Peak will be able to provide around 135 units. The Kwu Tung North site is the first site to be sold by tender in the Kwu Tung North New Development Area, and is capable of providing about 1 330 units. The site at Kai Tak is capable of providing about 775 units.

The MTR Corporation Limited plans to sell by tender in the fourth quarter Package 6 of the Wong Chuk Hang Station project, which will produce about 750 units.

In addition, five private development and redevelopment projects are expected to complete their lease modification processes in the fourth quarter and will produce a supply of 1 815 units.

Taking all sources of private housing land supply into account, the total supply in the fourth quarter would be about 4 800 units, the highest amongst the four quarters.

Together with the supply of about 8 070 units from the first three quarters, the total private housing land supply of the financial year will reach about 12 870 units, which is very close to our annual target of 12 900.

As regards commercial land, we will sell by tender in the fourth quarter the Caroline Hill Road site in Causeway Bay, providing about 100 000 square metres of gross floor space.

Looking ahead, the Government will continue to increase land supply through a multi-pronged approach to meet the housing, economic and social development needs of our community.

Thank you.