

## CE visits laboratories of testing agencies (with photos)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (December 25) visited the five private laboratories which help the Government provide COVID-19 testing services to learn more about their back of house operations and extend her holiday greetings to the staff members on duty.

Following the exchange of views at a meeting with the testing agencies at the Central Government Offices last week, Mrs Lam, accompanied by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, today visited the laboratories of the five testing agencies in different districts to learn more about the testing workflow and procedures, equipment and manpower as well as the daily testing capacity and other operational details.

The five agencies include BGI, Hong Kong Molecular Pathology Diagnostic Centre Limited, KingMed Diagnostics (Hong Kong) Limited, ONCO Medical Laboratory Limited and Prenetics. Apart from operating 19 community testing centres across the territory providing a total daily testing capacity of over 20 000 tests, they will also, upon requests of the Government, arrange mobile specimen collection stations in some districts with a larger number of confirmed cases involving residents to provide free testing services. This is to facilitate and encourage residents of the districts or individuals, who perceive themselves as having a higher risk of exposure, to undergo tests. Since mid-November, a total of 500 000 tests have been done in the community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations, from which more than 600 cases were identified for follow-up by the Centre for Health Protection. In addition, some of the laboratories are also commissioned by relevant departments to provide testing services for target groups.

Mrs Lam expressed gratitude to the staff members of various testing agencies for their continuous hard work during the holidays and their full support to the Government in fighting the epidemic over a period of time in the past, especially for the rapid testing support they provided for the relevant areas by setting up specimen collection stations or arranging testing vans when there was an outbreak in a district or at a housing estate.

Mrs Lam was pleased to note that the agencies have been conducting continuous research for the development of new testing equipment, reagent and rapid test methods, providing a more robust foundation for the anti-epidemic work of Hong Kong. She encouraged the agencies to work with the Government in the field of innovation and technology (I&T) to help develop Hong Kong into an international I&T hub together.

"Testing is an important part of our anti-epidemic efforts and the testing agencies are partners of the Government in the fight against the virus. Through the efforts of the Government and the co-operation of the agencies, the current maximum testing capacity of public and private

laboratories has been substantially increased to approximately 100 000 tests per day (without sample pooling). The Government will continue to proactively leverage the current testing capability to expand further the scale of testing in the community, giving full play to the strategy that all specified persons will be compulsorily tested, while making testing services available as far as possible to target groups which should be tested and people who would like to be tested, in order to identify cases as early as possible and cut the transmission chains in the community," Mrs Lam said.

