

CE visits medical staff and testing contractors during Lunar New Year (with photos/video)

â€¢ The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (February 3) visited the Community Treatment Facility at the AsiaWorld-Expo, the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre and the Caritas Medical Centre, as well as two contractors involved in the Government's testing work, to meet with their medical and testing staff, thanking them for their hard work in combating the new wave of the epidemic in Hong Kong and extending her New Year greetings to them.

Accompanied by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Chairman of the Hospital Authority (HA), Mr Henry Fan, and the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, Mrs Lam visited the Community Treatment Facility at the AsiaWorld-Expo and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre this morning to meet with their medical staff and receive briefings on the operation and provision of medical services to patients amid the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic. Mrs Lam and the others then visited the Accident and Emergency Department of the Caritas Medical Centre and received a briefing by its medical staff on the operational arrangements and workflow of handling patients with infectious diseases at the department during the Lunar New Year. Mrs Lam highly commended the medical personnel for combating the epidemic at the frontline all along and sincerely thanked them for working day and night during the Lunar New Year to provide quality services for patients and safeguard public health of Hong Kong.

To step up efforts to combat the fifth wave of the epidemic, the HA re-opened the Community Treatment Facility in several halls of the AsiaWorld-Expo on January 2 and 29, which currently provides a total of around 1 000 beds for COVID-19 patients who are clinically in stable conditions and able to take care of themselves independently. The North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, constructed with the support of the Central Government, has 816 isolation beds, which are being put into use by phase subject to the epidemic development so as to alleviate the pressure on the isolation facilities in public hospitals.

Mrs Lam then went to two testing contractors, namely Carelink Bioscience and KingMed Diagnostics (Hong Kong), to visit their staff and received briefings from their management on the provision of testing services in the community and further enhancement of their testing capability. She expressed her gratitude to them for their dedicated work during the festive season to fully support the Government's anti-epidemic work. In addition to operating community testing centres, the contractors have been mobilising staff to set up mobile specimen collection stations in designated areas within a short period of time at the Government's requests to provide testing services for local residents and other people in need.

The Government strives to conduct "restriction-testing declaration" operations, compulsory testing, voluntary testing, etc, in various districts, having regard to the risk levels, to identify infected households through testing in order to cut the virus transmission chains in the community as soon as possible. Over the past month, with the full and prompt support of the local testing contractors, over 3.5 million tests were conducted city-wide. The contractors are now able to conduct a total of not less than 100 000 nucleic acid tests on average per day. The Government aims to increase the daily average testing capacity to around 200 000 before mid-February to cope with any sudden surge in testing demand.

Mrs Lam said, "All along, the Government spares no effort in implementing testing strategies that are effective, targeted and most suited to the anti-epidemic efforts in Hong Kong in order to cut the virus transmission chains as quickly as possible. I wish to remind members of the public to strictly abide by the requirements of compulsory testing and "restriction-testing declaration" operations alike; and also appeal to all to pay attention to their health conditions at all times. People with suspected infection risks should undergo testing as soon as possible, including making good use of the rapid test kits distributed by the Government, to protect themselves and others. Let us work together to curb the spread of the virus in the community.

"Raising the vaccination rate is crucial for Hong Kong to ride out of the epidemic. Besides providing effective protection for those vaccinated and avoiding severe cases or fatalities among them, it helps safeguard the public healthcare system against overload or even collapse upon any epidemic outbreak. The Community Vaccination Centres have resumed service to the public starting today, with an aggregate vaccination capacity reaching 60 000 doses per day. Meanwhile, the Government is working out the detailed arrangements for the 'vaccine pass' to be launched in the latter half of this month. I appeal to members of the public who have yet to receive vaccination, especially the elderly, to grasp the opportunity to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves; and to those who are eligible for the third booster dose to get vaccinated in a timely manner to enhance protection."



