

LCQ20: Epidemic-related expenditure of Hospital Authority

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 4):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of the amount of additional funding provided, from January 23, 2020 when the first confirmed case of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 appeared in Hong Kong to February 28, 2022, by the Government to the Hospital Authority to assist it in coping with the epidemic, with a breakdown of the use of such funding by expenditure items (e.g. employment of healthcare personnel, provision of allowances to healthcare personnel, procurement of drugs, purchase of medical devices and equipment)?

Reply:

President,

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Hong Kong in 2019-20, the Government has provided additional resources to support the Hospital Authority (HA) in combatting the COVID-19 epidemic. These include:

- (a) \$4.7 billion from the Anti-epidemic Fund allocated in February 2020 to provide additional resources for the HA in tackling the COVID-19 epidemic, in particular for ensuring sufficient support and protection for frontline healthcare staff;
- (b) an additional funding of \$3.044 billion allocated to the HA in September 2020 to strengthen its service capacity in combatting the fourth wave of epidemic;
- (c) an additional subvention of \$7.5 billion allocated to the HA in 2022-23 for enhancing its capacity in combatting the new wave of COVID-19 epidemic and sustaining anti-epidemic measures; and
- (d) \$1.141 billion provided to the HA in view of its continued support on various fronts, including the operation of the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre (HKICC), COVID 19 Vaccination Programme, Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance (ELS) programme at General Outpatient Clinics (GOPCs), etc.

The HA has been flexibly deploying the funding for carrying out various anti-epidemic initiatives, which include:

- (a) personnel-related expenditure for frontline staff involved in anti-

epidemic efforts, including the provision of special allowances (e.g. Special Allowance for Designated Settings), extending and enhancing rates under the Special Honorarium Scheme, and recruiting more temporary and agency staff;

(b) establishment and operation of the HKICC and other isolation and treatment facilities, including the Treatment Centre for COVID-19 at AsiaWorld-Expo, the Community Isolation Facility at Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre, etc.;

(c) procuring additional personal protective equipment (PPE) and other necessary accessories for healthcare staff;

(d) enhancing support for laboratory testing and procuring drugs and medical equipment;

(e) enhancing hospital support services and supplies, etc.;

(f) widening ELS programme for COVID-19 at GOPCs;

(g) supporting the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme; and

(h) procuring rapid antigen test kits for patients and HA staff, etc.

As at February 28, 2022, the HA has incurred around \$8.565 billion for implementing various anti-epidemic measures, among which about \$3.1 billion is for manpower related expenditure; about \$1.3 billion for expenditure regarding establishment and operation of extra isolation and treatment facilities (excluding manpower related expenditure); and about \$4.2 billion for remaining expenditure items (including support for testing, vaccination, procurement of drugs and medical equipment, PPE and other equipment, etc.).