

## Transcript of remarks by SCS and SFH at media session (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, on the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme at a media session this afternoon (April 15):

Reporter: First, can authorities tell us why did it take so long for the Government to expand the vaccination to those under 30? Are you guys expanding it now in preparation for the vaccine bubble plan? Is there a possibility of further expanding the vaccination to even younger people, people under 16? If there are still unused jabs after the end of September, would these vaccination centres continue to operate? Can citizens assume that after the end of September, only Sinovac jabs will be available to them since all unused BioNTech jabs would be kind of expired already? Do officials have any estimation on how many BioNTech jabs will be unused and expired if the vaccination rate remains this low?

Secretary for the Civil Service: Thank you very much. First question is regarding the extension of the vaccination programme to cover people aged 16 to 29. We monitor closely the operation of the vaccination programme and also the demand and supply in a gradual manner. Now we have already dealt with the cancellation of more than 180 000 BioNTech bookings due to the suspension of BioNTech vaccination a few weeks ago. We have the capacity to expand the coverage of the vaccination scheme. We have also received views that quite a number of people aged below 30 would like to get the jabs so that they can protect their family members or the whole family could get vaccinated. It is the appropriate time that we introduce this arrangement.

The second question is regarding the coverage to people under 16. Firstly, we have to have available vaccine. That is the answer to your second question.

On the planning for operating the Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) until the end of September this year, our thinking behind is that we look at the supply of BioNTech vaccine. We have purchased 7.5 million doses of BioNTech vaccine and they would be delivered to Hong Kong by batches. There are certain limits. For example, you have to use the vaccines within three to four months. Why three to four months but not six months? Because the validity period of the vaccine is usually six months from the date of production. Once out of the production plant, they need to do some tests and then deliver to Hong Kong. When they arrive at Hong Kong usually we just have a period of about three to four months. And also we look at the capacity of our CVCs – we are able to handle 7.5 million doses in the next five months. So, that's roughly about the period. We have to have some sort of a plan and let the public know early, so that we can all plan accordingly.

At this stage, of course, I do not want to see any wastage of BioNTech vaccine. And that is why I announce early about our plan and urge the public to get vaccinated and make your booking as early as possible.

Reporter: (Inaudible.)

Secretary for the Civil Service: I tell the public about our plan of operating the CVCs by end of September. We will closely monitor the situation and we hope that we could all work together to make good use of the capacity of our CVCs from now on until end of September, so that every day all the capacity of the CVCs could be used because every day the BioNTech CVCs could handle up to 40 000 doses. You can see that every day we have not used up all the capacity. It is wastage already, but not wastage of vaccine because we handle it very carefully. We urge that we need to work together to make good use of the capacity of the CVCs and let's work together towards the target. We use up all the available vaccines provided to us so that all the 7.5 million doses could be used for more than 3 million Hong Kong people.

Secretary for Food and Health: I just want to quickly respond to your question about vaccine for people under 16. We are closely monitoring the development and research of vaccines. We understand that there are some vaccines that have now got some data about their use in people under 16. The Department of Health has been working very closely and trying to get more data from these vaccine manufacturers. If the data is satisfactory, we would obviously provide it to our expert committee for scrutiny. We will continue to closely monitor the development of vaccines for people under 16.

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

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## [Opening remarks by SDEV on planning and lands policy areas at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting](#)

Following is the opening remarks (English translation) by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, on planning and lands policy areas at the special meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee today (April 15):

Chairman,

In the 2021-22 financial year, the priority tasks on the Planning and Lands portfolio under the purview of the Development Bureau (DEVB) are:

(a) Land supply;

(b) Safety of drainage systems of buildings; and

(c) Building a liveable city.

## Land Supply

On land supply, we will continue to pursue the multi-pronged land supply strategy. At present, we are pressing ahead with the development of the Tung Chung New Town Extension and the Kwu Tung North/Fanling North, Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and Yuen Long South New Development Areas (NDAs). The first batch of public housing units is targeted for gradual completion from 2024 to 2028.

Over the past few years, we have identified 210 sites with potential for housing development. Rezoning has been completed or commenced for 70 per cent of them. It is estimated that about 40 per cent of the public housing units to be completed in the next 10 years will come from these rezoned sites.

For brownfield sites, we have promulgated the results of the second-phase review on scattered brownfield sites. In the two-phase review, we have shortlisted a total of 12 brownfield clusters for higher density public housing development in the short to medium term. Taking into account these brownfield clusters, the NDAs, and other ongoing efforts to develop brownfield sites already announced, a total of over 860 hectares of brownfield sites would be gradually developed for housing and other land uses, accounting for over 50 per cent of the total brownfield area in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, we will soon apply for funding from the LegCo for investigation and design of the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, and will commence as soon as possible a planning and engineering study for the remaining phase of development of New Territories North (NTN) (covering NTN New Town and the Man Kam To Logistics Corridor).

Apart from implementing various land supply projects, we are committed to expediting land supply process by streamlining procedures. To this end, the Development Projects Facilitation Office was established under the DEVB in December last year to facilitate the processing of planning, lease modification/land exchange applications and more for larger-scale private residential development projects leading up to the commencement of works, with a view to ensuring effective processing of development applications.

Moreover, the remit of the steering group tasked with streamlining development control under the DEVB has been expanded to cover approving departments other than those under the DEVB, with a view to reviewing more comprehensively different aspects involved in the development approval process.

## Safety of Drainage Systems of Buildings

On the safety of draining systems of buildings, in response to rising public concerns, we have sought funding of \$1 billion through the

Appropriation Bill 2021 to establish the Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Members' support at the Panel on Development earlier regarding the scheme. Subject to funding approval, we will launch the scheme in May this year. It is expected that the funding scheme would benefit owners of over 3 000 old domestic buildings in repairing or upgrading the drainage systems of their buildings. The Buildings Department will issue a practice note this month to promulgate various enhancements concerning drainage systems; the industry and owners are encouraged to adopt the new design standards in repair works.

### Building a Liveable City

On building a liveable city, a major programme launched this year is the Invigorating Island South initiative, which aims at developing the Southern District into a better place to live, work and have fun. The Invigorating Island South Office under the DEVB commenced operation in February this year. It is now actively listening to local views for formulating a work plan on the way ahead.

In addition, we will continue to pursue harbourfront enhancement with the earmarked funding of \$6.5 billion. We will adopt an incremental approach so that harbourfront sites may be opened as early as possible. We will also seek funding from the LegCo for commencing the construction works of two major projects, namely the boardwalk underneath the Island Eastern Corridor and the harbourfront park at Eastern Street North in Sai Ying Pun this year.

Thank you.

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## [Update on cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci cases at Tuen Mun Hospital](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients confirmed to be carriers of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) in a medical ward, the spokesperson for Tuen Mun Hospital made the following update today (April 15):

In accordance with the prevailing infection control guidelines, the hospital has conducted contact tracing. One more patient, a 74-year-old male, was found to be a VRE carrier without any symptoms of infection. The patient had been discharged earlier.

The ward concerned has adopted the following enhanced infection control

measures:

1. Enhanced hand hygiene and stringent contact precautions;
2. Enhanced attention to contamination-prone procedures; and
3. Enhanced disinfection and cleaning of the ward concerned.

The hospital will continue the enhanced infection control measures and closely monitor the situation of the ward. The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

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## [Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (April 15), nine COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 11 246 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 658 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 214 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 127 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 19 public hospitals and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, among which six patients are in critical condition, two are in serious condition and the remaining 119 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
Discharged	8126, 11406, 11450, 11477, 11527, 11544, 11555, 11575, 11606
Critical	6607, 6794, 8078, 9907, 10358, 10942
Serious	6386, 7468

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# COVID-19 Vaccination Programme opens to persons aged 16 or above

The Government announced today (April 15) that the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme will be expanded to cover persons aged 16 to 29. The minimum age for receiving the BioNTech vaccine is 16, and that for receiving the Sinovac vaccine is 18. Separately, the Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) across the territory are expected to operate until the end of September.

"Taking into account the supply of the vaccines and the operation of the Vaccination Programme, we have decided to expand the programme to allow more people to get vaccinated as early as possible to protect oneself and others," a Government spokesman said.

Persons in the above age group can make reservations starting from 9am on April 23 through the online booking system on the designated website of the Vaccination Programme ([www.covidvaccine.gov.hk](http://www.covidvaccine.gov.hk)) for receiving vaccines at 29 CVCs and 18 general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority (HA). They can also make appointments for vaccinations with private doctors or clinics participating in the programme.

After lowering the age threshold for vaccinations, people whose identity documents show that they are aged 18 or above can receive vaccinations without the need to produce other supporting documents. However, people aged 16 and 17 are required to bring along a consent form signed by their parents to receive their vaccinations. The consent form can be downloaded from the designated website.

Meanwhile, the CVCs at Tseung Kwan O Sports Centre, Osman Ramju Sadick Memorial Sports Centre and Yau Oi Sports Centre, which administer the Sinovac vaccine currently, will soon switch to provide BioNTech vaccination services as originally planned.

The CVCs at Tseung Kwan O Sports Centre and Yau Oi Sports Centre will provide BioNTech vaccination services starting from April 20. They will concurrently provide services up to April 30 to a small number of persons who have made second-dose Sinovac vaccination appointments. During the two-week transitional period, the venues of the two CVCs will be delineated into two distinct zones for administering the two vaccines separately. Diversion arrangements will be made at the entrance and clear instructions and signage will also be displayed inside the venue for easy identification. The CVC at Osman Ramju Sadick Memorial Sports Centre will offer BioNTech vaccination services starting from May 1.

Commencing May 1, the number of CVCs administering the BioNTech vaccine will increase to 24, and five CVCs will provide vaccination services for the Sinovac vaccine.

Members of the public can book the BioNTech vaccination at the three CVCs through the online booking system at the designated website from 9am tomorrow (April 16).

Taking into account the supply of the BioNTech vaccine, the vaccination rate and its limitations in storage, the CVCs administering the BioNTech vaccine are expected to operate until the end of September. People wishing to receive the BioNTech vaccine must make an appointment to receive the first dose by the end of August in order to complete the vaccination of two doses by the end of September for better protection from the vaccine.

The CVCs which administer the Sinovac vaccine are also expected to operate up to the end of September. As the Sinovac vaccine can be stored for a longer period, the Government will continue to provide Sinovac vaccination services through more than 1,600 private doctors participating in the programme and the 18 general out-patient clinics of the HA.

Members of the public can search for information about all vaccination venues through the GeoInfo Map ([www.map.gov.hk/gm/map/s/m/communityvaccinationservicesofcovid](http://www.map.gov.hk/gm/map/s/m/communityvaccinationservicesofcovid)) and the Interactive Map Dashboard of COVID-19 ([chp-dashboard.geodata.gov.hk/covid-19/en.html](http://chp-dashboard.geodata.gov.hk/covid-19/en.html)) on the designated website.