

Update on cluster of Multi-drug Resistant Acinetobacter cases in Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern 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 Multi-drug Resistant Acinetobacter (MDRA) in medical wards, the spokesperson for Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital made the following update today (April 1):

In accordance with prevailing guidelines, the hospital has commenced contact tracing and confirmed two more male patients (aged 74 and 80) in the medical ward to be carriers of MDRA. One of the patients is currently under medical surveillance and isolation treatment with stable condition. The other patient had been discharged.

Following the activation of the Emergency Response Level in public hospitals, visiting arrangements have been suspended. The following infection control measures have been stepped up according to established guidelines:

1. Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of wards concerned;
2. Applied stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene of staff and patients; and
3. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation in the ward concerned. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Second-term Human Resources Planning Commission convenes fourth meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the fourth meeting of the second-term Human Resources Planning Commission held online this afternoon (April 1).

At the meeting, members were briefed on the key findings of a study on Hong Kong youth's willingness to pursue a career in Mainland cities in the

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), as well as the policy recommendations made in the study to encourage more Hong Kong youth to work in GBA Mainland cities. The study was conducted by the Hong Kong Guangdong Youth Association (the Association), the University of Hong Kong and the Proactive Think Tank in September and October last year. It was the third consecutive year for the Association to conduct similar studies.

Members generally agreed that there was an abundance of opportunities brought about by GBA development. Hong Kong youth should actively explore various development opportunities in the GBA in planning their career development. Members suggested that organisations with Mainland connections and knowledge should leverage their strengths to collaborate with the Government to promote GBA development and encourage Hong Kong youth to pursue a career in the GBA. The study provided insights to the Government and different sectors in Hong Kong in understanding Hong Kong youth's considerations in deciding whether to pursue a career in GBA Mainland cities for exploring further measures to facilitate Hong Kong youth to integrate into GBA development.

In addition, members were also briefed by the Government on the Global STEM Professorship Scheme announced in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address.

Members noted that the objective of the Scheme was to support the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) in recruiting internationally renowned I&T scholars and their teams to work in Hong Kong by providing funding for the universities in order to offer more competitive remuneration packages. By doing so, it can help attract more world-renowned scholars to engage in I&T-related teaching and research activities in Hong Kong, thereby expanding the I&T talent pool of Hong Kong. Up to 100 professorships can be awarded under the Scheme, with each eligible scholar receiving a subsidy for at most five years. The Scheme is estimated to cost around \$2 billion. The relevant subsidy will cover remuneration of the awarded scholars, subsidies for the research teams and costs of setting up laboratories.

To implement the Scheme, the Government will establish an Assessment Panel comprising representatives from different sectors, which will be responsible for vetting nominations and making recommendations. The Panel will develop a set of stringent and objective assessment criteria and adopt a merit-based approach in determining the suitability of the candidates. UGC-funded universities will recruit scholars through their existing channels and submit their nominations for the Panel's review. The Scheme is expected to be open for applications from the second quarter of this year onwards.

Members supported the Government in launching the Scheme, which helps Hong Kong to attract world-renowned I&T scholars and their teams to come to Hong Kong and contribute to the city's I&T development. Members hoped that the Scheme could be rolled out as soon as practicable and offered suggestions on the implementation details of the Scheme.

Government announces arrangements for designated flights from United Kingdom to Hong Kong and quarantine arrangements for arrivals from low-risk places

The Government announced today (April 1) the arrangements for designated flights from the United Kingdom (UK) to Hong Kong and the latest quarantine arrangements for arrivals from overseas low-risk specified places.

Designated flights from the UK to Hong Kong

Due to the severe global epidemic situation of COVID-19, and to guard against the importation of new virus variants, the Government has put in place since late December last year the measure under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to restrict persons who had stayed in extremely high-risk Group A specified places from boarding flights for Hong Kong. In view of the decline of confirmed cases in the UK, where the majority of the affected Hong Kong residents are situated, as well as the satisfactory vaccination progress there, there is room to gradually lift the relevant boarding restriction.

A Government spokesman said, "To ensure the orderly return of the relevant Hong Kong residents, and reduce the infection risks of a large group of travellers arriving at Hong Kong at the same time, the Government will specify that passengers of designated flights will not be subject to the restriction on boarding for Hong Kong and will arrange for these returnees to undergo the 21-day compulsory quarantine in a specified quarantine facility."

The designated flights will depart from London. Hong Kong residents who have stayed in any Group A specified place on the day of boarding or the 21 days before that day can board for direct return to Hong Kong.

Travellers arriving on the designated flights will all be required to undergo compulsory quarantine at the centrally managed specified quarantine facility (Rambler Garden Hotel in Tsing Yi) for 21 days so as to properly reduce the infection risks. The relevant persons under quarantine will be tested again on the seventh, 12th and 19th days during quarantine. Passengers of the designated flights must stay in the specified quarantine facility (Rambler Garden Hotel in Tsing Yi) to undergo compulsory quarantine, and cannot stay at hotels under the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme.

The designated flights will be the CX2252 flights departing London in the UK on April 21 and April 28 at 9.10am. The airline will open the ticketing reservation system on April 8, and travellers who have successfully booked tickets will be redirected to the reservation system of the specified quarantine facility to book their rooms. The room rate per night will be \$400 to \$500.

Upon check-in for the designated flights, travellers will be required to present negative result proof of a reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) nucleic acid test for COVID-19, conducted within 72 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft. Results of tests conducted using other techniques will not be accepted. In addition, the travellers must present the confirmation of their room reservation in the specified quarantine facility mentioned above for 21 nights after their arrival in Hong Kong.

The spokesman reiterated, "The boarding restriction currently applicable to Group A specified places is still in force. Any person who has stayed in Group A specified places (including the UK) for more than two hours on the day of boarding or during the 21 days before that day are not allowed to board for Hong Kong, unless they are boarding for a designated flight."

The Government will closely monitor the reservation situation of the designated flights and the specified quarantine facility, and discuss with the airline on arranging additional flights if necessary.

Quarantine arrangements for persons arriving from low-risk places

Meanwhile, the global epidemic situation remains severe with new virus variants ravaging many parts of the world. As such, the Government needs to maintain the 21-day compulsory quarantine requirement for most places outside China, especially for persons who have stayed in high-risk places.

However, considering that the epidemic situations in certain places have stabilised and pose lower public health risks, the Government will adjust the quarantine arrangements for persons who have stayed in low-risk overseas places under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) and Cap. 599H, and allow the relevant non-Hong Kong residents to enter Hong Kong.

The compulsory quarantine period for persons arriving at Hong Kong on or after April 9, and who have only stayed in Australia, New Zealand or Singapore on the day of arrival in Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day, will be shortened to 14 days, while they will be required to self-monitor for the subsequent seven days and be subject compulsory testing on the 19th day after their arrival at Hong Kong. The relevant persons will still be required to undergo compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels. This arrangement will be applicable to both Hong Kong residents and

non-Hong Kong residents.

In view of the roll-out of vaccination programmes in many places, the Government is also considering adjustments to the compulsory quarantine requirements for persons who have stayed in other non-high-risk places upon their arrival at Hong Kong. If the relevant persons have completed vaccination, their existing 21-day compulsory quarantine period may be shortened, while they would still have to self-monitor for a certain period and be subject to additional compulsory testing. Persons who have not yet been vaccinated would still be subject to 21-day compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels. The Government will announce the implementation date and relevant details of this measure in due course.

The spokesman said, "The appropriate adjustments to the entry restrictions and quarantine arrangements will be conducive to the gradual resumption of travel between Hong Kong and other overseas places. In the meantime, we will continue various measures to stringently guard against the importation of cases."

To facilitate the public's understanding of the latest boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements under the relevant regulations for persons who have stayed in different places outside China, the Government will add Group D specified places (i.e. Australia, New Zealand and Singapore) to the existing grouping of overseas places. The details are set out in the Annex.

Except for the arrangements for the designated flights departing from the UK, and the newly added Group D specified places, the existing requirements applicable to the other groups of specified places remain unchanged.

"The Government will continue to closely monitor the situation, including the developments of the epidemic both globally and locally, vaccination progress, and changes in the volume of cross-boundary passenger traffic, and will adjust the boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from places with different risks when necessary."

Details on the grouping of specified places and their respective boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements can be found at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/high-risk-places.html.

Meetings of Legislative Council and its Committees

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

Details of the meetings of the Legislative Council (LegCo) and its Committees to be held in the LegCo Complex during the week from April 5 to 9 are available in the meeting schedule attached.

The information in the meeting schedule is subject to change. Please refer to the LegCo Calendar on the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk) for the latest details of meetings.

Members of the public can watch or listen to the meetings via the Webcast system on the LegCo Website. To observe the proceedings of the meetings at the LegCo Complex, members of the public may call 3919 3399 during office hours to reserve seats.

SJ continues to explain improvements to HKSAR's electoral system (with photos)

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, continued to meet with stakeholders in the community at a briefing session today (April 1) to explain the improvements to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)'s electoral system, enabling them to have a better understanding of the matter and thereby render their support.

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed the amended Annex I to the Basic Law on Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Annex II to the Basic Law on Method for the Formation of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Its Voting Procedures for improving the electoral system of the HKSAR. The Department of Justice will give its full support to the Government's work with a view to improving the electoral system as early as possible.

Ms Cheng said that the improvements aim to expand the balanced and orderly political participation as well as provide a broader representation of society, reflecting the overall interests of society and signifying an important move to advance Hong Kong's democratic electoral system.

To explain to the community on the importance, necessity and legality of improving the HKSAR's electoral system, Ms Cheng has attended briefing sessions for two consecutive days, striving to gain its staunch support.

