

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 (March 15):

Reporter: Firstly, about the inoculation rate, you said around 200 000 people have got their first dose and currently there are three million people eligible, so that's around seven per cent. What do you make of this inoculation rate? If people are not so enthusiastic or even reluctant to get vaccinated, will letting more people become eligible help drive up the inoculation rate? And what are you doing to try to make people more accepted of the jabs? For example, will you consider doing more promotion or education or even providing incentive? Secondly, you said that there are 12 more vaccination centres opening tomorrow, so what is the maximum number of jabs that can be given each day? If all centres are running at the full capacity, what is the current utilisation rate? You said that the BioNTech jabs are difficult to store and if not used properly, they will be wasted. Any jabs being wasted at the moment?

Secretary for the Civil Service: Thank you very much. At present, close to 200 000 people got their first jabs. The most important thing is that we have the vaccination venues, we have the vaccines available and make the necessary arrangement for those who wish to be vaccinated can get the vaccine. By setting priority groups, of course, would let those who have higher priority could come forward first. But based on the experience in the past 18 days, we notice that there are still capacity to handle more and there are people who do not belong to the priority groups but who wish to be vaccinated early. The present expansion of the priority groups to include those aged 30 and above basically is to make more people who wish to be vaccinated can get the vaccine and also to streamline the administrative arrangements. By so doing people need not provide the proof of their occupations or companies or the sectors that they belong. They just show their ID card and make the online booking and then get the jabs. It will make the whole process smooth and more efficient. We will continue to monitor the progress. Our target is to encourage people to get vaccinated and our plan is to have most of the people get vaccinated by the end of this year. We are working towards that target. Twelve more centres administering BioNTech will be opened, in operation, tomorrow. We monitored the utilisation rate. In the past few days, we notice that for BioNTech vaccine, around 90 per cent or 92 per cent is the utilisation rate. That means that for those people who made the bookings, over 90 per cent came forward and got vaccinated. It doesn't mean that we would have a wastage of vaccine, particularly for the BioNTech, because the actual operation, I mean the colleagues in the centres closely monitor the number of people showing up and then they make the arrangement to do the dilution and withdrawals, particularly when it comes to close to 8pm, say

after 7pm. They would closely monitor the number of people showing up. And then they would do the dilution and withdrawals, in Chinese says "ââââ", so that you can monitor the number of vaccine really required and then utilise the vials and get the dilution and withdrawals. By so doing, with this meticulous monitoring and planning, we can minimise the vaccine that cannot be used. We will continue to do that. As regards the capacity, as I mentioned, with the opening of the 12 centres tomorrow, by the end of this month, the two vaccines altogether, more than 300 000 quotas would be made available for people making the booking.

Secretary for Food and Health: Regarding gaining people's confidence in vaccines, I think it is very important for us to understand the benefits of vaccination, let alone the vaccines that we have authorised in Hong Kong now are safe, efficacious and also of the required quality. The benefit of vaccination as I have said earlier is that the more people get vaccinated and the faster they get vaccinated, the better they are protected, not only as an individual but also in the community as well as improving or helping the control of our epidemic situation. As we can see, after some relaxation of the social distancing measures, we have already observed some outbreaks. Certainly, we do not want to see all these different premises closing down and opening again. Therefore, with arrival of the vaccines, it is important for everybody to get vaccinated. It would be of the best interest, not only of the individuals, but also of all the sector to get vaccinated. It is because with vaccination, with more people getting vaccinated in Hong Kong, the faster we will be able to get herd immunity, and the faster we will be able to get our normal daily life and our economic situation back on track, let alone all the other incentives like travelling. I think it is important for everybody to embrace the opportunity that we have now in Hong Kong. We can have a choice for vaccination, and also we have enough vaccines for everybody to be vaccinated.

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

[WSD launches virtual tour of Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir](#)

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) launched a [virtual tour](#) of the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir today (March 15).

The Antiquities and Monuments Office has completed research on the heritage value of the above-mentioned service reservoir. Having examined the value of the service reservoir based on the prevailing six assessment criteria, the independent Historic Buildings Assessment Panel recommended a Grade 1 status for this historic structure. The Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) endorsed the recommended grading at its meeting held on March 11, to be

followed by a one-month public consultation starting from today.

The 360-degree virtual tour enables the public to tour the service reservoir and appreciate its internal structures. The virtual tour will also enhance the public's understanding of the service reservoir with a general introduction and showcase for its engineering features, thereby facilitating the public's participation in the public consultation of the proposed grading conducted by the AAB.

The WSD commenced the temporary strengthening and tidying up works for the service reservoir in January this year and will continue to carry out other improvement works, including provision of internal lighting and ventilation facilities in the service reservoir. After completing the required strengthening and improvement works, and ensuring the structural safety of the service reservoir, the WSD plans to allow restricted opening of the service reservoir for visiting by the public later this year.

LegCo to consider Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill 2020

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

The Legislative Council (LegCo) will hold a meeting on Wednesday (March 17) at 11.30am (or immediately after the meeting for the Chief Executive's Question Time to be held at 11am) in the Chamber of the LegCo Complex. During the meeting, the Second Reading debate on the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill 2020 will resume. If the Bill is supported by Members and receives its Second Reading, it will stand committed to the committee of the whole Council. After the committee of the whole Council has completed consideration of the Bill and its report is adopted by the Council, the Bill will be set down for the Third Reading.

The Second Reading debate on the Arbitration (Amendment) Bill 2021 and the Stamp Duty (Amendment) Bill 2020 will also resume. If the Bills are supported by Members and receive their Second Reading, they will stand committed to the committee of the whole Council. After the committee of the whole Council has completed consideration of the Bills and their reports are adopted by the Council, the Bills will be set down for the Third Reading.

Meanwhile, the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2021, the Revenue (First Registration Tax and Licence Fees for Motor Vehicles) Bill 2021, the Public Offices (Candidacy and Taking Up Offices) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2021, the Revenue (Stamp Duty) Bill 2021 and the Revenue (Tax Concessions) Bill 2021 will be introduced into the Council for the First Reading and the Second Reading. The Second Reading debate on the Bills will be adjourned.

On Member's Bill, the Waterworks (Waterworks Regulations) (Amendment) Bill 2021 will also be introduced into the Council for the First Reading and the Second Reading. The Second Reading debate on the Bill will be adjourned.

On Government motions, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare will move three proposed resolutions under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance and the Occupational Deafness (Compensation) Ordinance respectively. The proposed resolutions are set out in Appendices 1-3 respectively.

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury will move a proposed resolution under the Public Finance Ordinance. The proposed resolution is set out in Appendix 4.

On Members' motions, Mr Paul Tse will move a motion on examining the amendment of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance and implementing the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter reclamation works. The motion is set out in Appendix 5. Mr Frankie Yick will move an amendment to Mr Paul Tse's motion.

Mr Chan Hak-kan will move a motion on supporting the unemployed and underemployed. The motion is set out in Appendix 6. Dr Priscilla Leung, Mr Luk Chung-hung and Mr Shiu Ka-fai will move separate amendments to Mr Chan Hak-kan's motion.

Members will also ask the Government 22 questions on various policy areas, six of which require oral replies.

The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk). Members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting via the Webcast system on the LegCo Website. To observe the proceedings of the meeting at the LegCo Complex, members of the public may call 3919 3399 during office hours to reserve seats.

Vaccination priority groups to be expanded to cover people aged 30 or above

The Government announced today (March 15) that the priority groups under the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme will be expanded to cover people aged between 30 and 59, students aged 16 or above studying outside Hong Kong and domestic helpers.

Members of the public in these new categories can make reservations

starting from 9am tomorrow (March 16) through the online booking system on the designated website of the Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk) for receiving vaccines at Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) and the 18 general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority. They can also make appointments for vaccination with a private doctor or clinic participating in the programme.

"We believe that members of the public are concerned and worried about the recent cluster outbreak in a fitness centre which has led to an increase of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a short period of time. Apart from striving to contain the epidemic at the soonest and continuing to maintain good personal hygiene, it is of utmost importance for people to get vaccinated as early as possible," a spokesman for the Government said.

"Taking into account the supply of the vaccines and the operation of the Vaccination Programme, we have decided to expand the scope of the priority groups so as to allow more people to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect oneself and others."

The priority groups, after expansion, are as follows:

1. Persons aged 30 years or above (a maximum of two carers who accompany elderly people aged 70 or above can also receive vaccination);
2. Personnel in healthcare settings and those participating in anti-epidemic related work;
3. Residents and staff of residential care homes for the elderly/residential care homes for persons with disabilities and staff of community care services units for the elderly/persons with disabilities;
4. Personnel maintaining critical public services;
5. Personnel providing cross-boundary transportation or working at control points and ports;
6. Staff of food and beverages premises, markets, supermarkets, convenience stores and couriers (including takeaway food delivery);
7. Staff of local public transport service operators;
8. Registered construction workers and other resident site personnel;
9. Staff of property management (including security and cleaning staff);
10. Teachers and school staff;
11. Staff of the tourism industry;
12. Staff of scheduled premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F);
13. Students studying outside Hong Kong (aged 16 or above); and
14. Domestic helpers.

After expansion, the vaccination priority groups will cover more than 5.5 million people, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the population aged 16 (the current minimum age for vaccination) or above.

The Vaccination Programme has been running smoothly since its launch on February 26. Starting from tomorrow, 12 CVCs administering the Comirnaty vaccine will come into operation, bringing the total number of CVCs to 19 (there are eight other CVCs administering the Sinovac vaccine), making it more convenient for the public to get vaccinated.

With the accumulation of operational experience at CVCs and the opening of more CVCs, the booking system will provide an additional daily vaccination quota of about 23 000. Furthermore, the public can also receive the Sinovac vaccine from some 1 400 private doctors at around 2 000 clinics participating in the programme.

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-19?lg=tc) and the Interactive Map Dashboard of COVID-19 (chp-dashboard.geodata.gov.hk/covid-19/zh.html) on the designated website.

CHP investigates 30 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, March 15, the CHP was investigating 30 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 312 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 311 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, 14 are imported cases.

A total of 276 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (March 1 to 14), including 223 local cases of which 61 are from unknown sources.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to the compulsory testing notice. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop.

In view of the latest epidemic developments in the Mainland, the previous arrangement to provide specimen collection containers to inbound travellers arriving via land boundary control points who have been to Hebei Province in the past 14 days will be cancelled from tomorrow (March 16). These travellers, if they are not exempted persons, are subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at a designated place (home or other accommodation)

upon arrival in Hong Kong.

The CHP reminded members of the public that the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) requires all household members of close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test within a specified period according to compulsory testing notices (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202102/03/P2021020300018.htm) published in the Gazette under the Regulation.

Moreover, the Government has expanded the scope of the priority groups of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme to cover staff of scheduled premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) including staff of fitness centres. They can make reservations through the online booking system for receiving vaccines at community vaccination centres or get vaccinated at clinics of private doctors as early as possible.

The CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps). After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile

app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.