

CE appeals to public to fight virus together with confidence

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, led six Principal Officials to hold a press conference today (August 21) to review the development of the COVID-19 epidemic situation in Hong Kong, the anti-epidemic strategy and the future work priorities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. She also appealed to the public to fight against the disease with concerted efforts.

Mrs Lam said, "The new wave of rapidly worsening infections since early July remains severe. The Government has never dropped its guard and has strived to prevent imported cases by reducing the cross-boundary flow of people and prevent the spread in the community by maintaining social distancing. It has also adopted the 'suppress and lift' strategy taking into account the epidemic situation.

"The stringent social distancing measures introduced recently have no doubt had an impact on the local businesses and brought inconvenience to the people. Nevertheless, the coming week is a critical juncture. I hope enterprises and members of the public exercise patience. The Government will closely observe if the emerging downward trend in the number of confirmed cases will continue and implement various types of follow-up work."

The Government's follow-up work in the coming week will include completing the virus tests and follow-up work for the clusters involving the container terminal and foreign domestic helper dormitories, reviewing the test results of the expanded targeted groups, discussing with the relevant sectors arrangements for resumption of business in an orderly manner and preparing for the launch of the large-scale Universal Community Testing Programme to provide voluntary virus tests for all citizens. Among them, the large-scale Universal Community Testing Programme is made possible with the support from the Central Government, which will be responsible for the laboratory test services required.

"The Central Government cares about and loves Hong Kong. In addition to supporting the HKSAR Government's Universal Community Testing Programme, it has also committed to the setting up of the community treatment facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and a temporary hospital nearby. On behalf of the HKSAR Government and the people of Hong Kong, I would like to express heartfelt thanks to the Central Government for its support," Mrs Lam said.

She also said that given the anti-epidemic experience over the past eight months, Hong Kong has strengthened its capability in various areas including testing, tracing the sources of infections, quarantine facilities, treatment facilities, production of protective equipment and application of technology, and that Hong Kong is much better prepared to cope with another potential wave of the epidemic down the road. The HKSAR Government has also

proactively followed up on the procurement of vaccines.

Looking ahead, Mrs Lam said that with the easing of the epidemic, the HKSAR Government will launch the work to rebuild the economy immediately, including leveraging the health code system to resume normal contact between people in Hong Kong and in the Mainland, exploring the setting up of "travel bubbles" and working in other areas such as commerce and trade, finance, innovation and technology, public works projects and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The HKSAR Government will also strive to support the sectors hardest hit by the epidemic, including continuing to implement the second tranche of the Employment Support Scheme and other support programmes as well as rolling out the third round of the Anti-epidemic Fund.

"I appeal to landlords of shops, banks and large enterprises to support the small tenants and small and medium-sized enterprises to tide over the difficult times together. I also appeal to members of the public to strictly observe social distancing and personal hygiene. As long as we stay united, we will get through the epidemic very soon," Mrs Lam said.