

[CE continues to visit anti-epidemic personnel during Lunar New Year \(with photos/video\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (February 2) visited Kennedy Town, a laboratory at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and Kwun Tong Community Centre to meet with anti-epidemic personnel during the Lunar New Year and extend her New Year greetings to them. She also took the opportunity to inspect the site where the HKU planned to construct facilities for technology research.

Accompanied by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, and the Director of Drainage Services, Ms Alice Pang, Mrs Lam visited a stationary site of sewage sampling in Kennedy Town this morning to learn about the latest situation of on-site sampling under the co-operation between the relevant Government departments and contractors. She noted that the Drainage Services Department (DSD) had been preparing to fight the epidemic over the past year through making continuous improvements to the sampling methods and equipment used and increasing significantly the coverage by stationary sampling points. Before the fifth wave of the epidemic emerged, over 100 stationary points of surveillance, covering a population of some five million people, had been set up; and since the outbreak of this new wave, the DSD and the Environmental Protection Department had also been conducting tests through temporary mobile points to collect more sewage samples upstream so as to strengthen the tracing of invisible transmission chains in the community.

Mrs Lam and the officials then visited the Environmental Microbiome Engineering and Biotechnology Laboratory of the HKU. Accompanied by the President and Vice-Chancellor of the HKU, Professor Zhang Xiang, they received a briefing from the team led by Professor Zhang Tong on the treatment of sewage samples and testing process, as well as the ways to analyse the positive results therefrom, so as to help the Government zero in on places for imposing "restriction-testing declarations", issuing compulsory testing notices, distributing rapid test kits, etc, having regard to the risk level of the districts concerned. This sought to identify infection cases early and prevent the virus from spreading in the community. A case in point took place in Wong Tai Sin in late January. Positive results were detected at the stationary point of sewage surveillance in the district on January 18. After a few days of targeted testing through mobile points of surveillance, the positive results were traced down to the sewage of Tropicana Gardens and Hsin Kuang Centre. On this basis, the Government swiftly conducted compulsory testing and "restriction-testing declaration" operations alike, identifying eight and one confirmed cases involving Delta respectively in the buildings concerned. Laboratory testing sought not only to identify positive results from sewage surveillance, but also to ascertain if the virus belonged to the Omicron or Delta variant through genetic sequencing, thereby facilitating

follow-up by the Centre for Health Protection.

Mrs Lam was grateful to the relevant Government departments, the HKU team, sampling contractors, etc, for working closely together to arrange for sewage sampling at various points in different districts across the territory within a very short period of time and then deliver the samples to laboratories for virus testing, striving to have the test results within the same day to assist the Government in tracing the possible infection cases in the community early. She encouraged all the personnel participating in the various aspects of sewage surveillance to keep up their hard work, including stepping up the frequency of surveillance and capacity of daily testing, so as to expedite the tracing of patients in invisible cases.

Accompanied by Professor Zhang Xiang, Mrs Lam took the opportunity to inspect the site in Pok Fu Lam where the HKU planned to construct facilities for technology research and learn about the progress of the project. She announced in her 2021 Policy Address in October last year that the Government had accepted in principle the proposal of the HKU to reserve a four-hectare site currently zoned "Green Belt" in Pok Fu Lam to construct facilities for technology research to consolidate Hong Kong's leading position in basic research. She hoped that the project would help the HKU further strengthen its research capability and attract more international talents, promoting the development of technology research in Hong Kong.

Afterwards, accompanied by the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Jack Chan, the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Joe Wong, and the Acting Director of Home Affairs, Miss Vega Wong, Mrs Lam visited Kwun Tong Community Centre to meet with more than 100 volunteers who assisted in packing the COVID-19 rapid test kits. She expressed her gratitude to Kwun Tong District Office and the various district service organisations, as well as the volunteers mobilised by them, for carrying out the packaging work during the festive season. Their participation contributed to the Government's efforts to distribute rapid test kits to members of the public for self-testing in districts with positive test results from sewage surveillance, so that infected persons could be identified as soon as possible.

To combat the fifth wave of the epidemic, the district offices under the Home Affairs Department have been stepping up co-ordination with various district service organisations to mobilise thousands of volunteers to assist in packaging and distribute more than 500 000 sets of rapid test kits to the households, cleansing workers, property management staff, etc, in the relevant districts so far.

"Hong Kong is the first city in the world to adopt large-scale sewage surveillance in tandem with compulsory testing to trace infection cases with success. This is also testimony to the effective combination of achievements in technology research with real-life application. In the face of the risks posed by the highly transmissible variants amid the fifth wave of the epidemic, the Government is racking up and distributing rapid test kits to the residents and those working in the districts who have been exposed to

infection risks to undergo testing on a voluntary basis to achieve 'early identification, early isolation and early treatment'," said Mrs Lam. "I am grateful to all the teams and members for their hard work in combating the epidemic on various fronts, as well as the colleagues and volunteers who continue to fight the virus during the Lunar New Year. I hope that all of us will stay confident and strive ahead in concert so as to ride out of this wave of the epidemic early."

