

CE thanks Legislative Council for making special arrangement for conduct of LegCo business amid severe epidemic

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (February 23) expressed her sincere gratitude to the President and Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) for their prompt and helpful response to her request to enable the Government to focus on the overriding mission of fighting the COVID-19 epidemic by reducing their requests for information at this critical juncture.

Mrs Lam wrote to the President of the LegCo on February 21 to appeal to the LegCo Members for significantly reducing their raising of questions on the work of the Government in the coming two months, particularly in relation to the Finance Committee's scrutiny of the Estimates of Expenditure 2022-23. Based on past years' experience, the LegCo scrutiny of the Estimates of Expenditure alone usually involves up to several thousands of written questions to be answered by various Controlling Officers within a short period, and this would pose a considerable workload for government colleagues at various levels.

Mrs Lam said, "Assuming the primary responsibility to stabilise the epidemic situation, the Government has mobilised all available manpower and staff at various levels in different bureaux and departments to join hands to form a robust anti-epidemic team. Almost every Principal Official has been tasked to lead operations, and they in turn have mobilised staff or redeployed them from their original job to undertake anti-epidemic duties."

The LegCo President, in his reply to the Chief Executive today, said that after consulting the Chairman of the Finance Committee and various groups of Members, all Members supported the arrangement that each Member will raise no more than 10 questions in relation to their examination of the Estimates of Expenditure 2022-23. Also, before the epidemic subsides, the LegCo will only deal with matters with legislative effect and Panels should only hold meetings to discuss urgent issues or matters relating to the epidemic. Meanwhile, the LegCo will continue to adopt special arrangements for holding meetings remotely.

Mrs Lam said, "The LegCo has a constitutional role to examine and approve the Budget, and raise questions on the work of the Government. I fully respect the role and functions of the LegCo Members and the request we made is an exceptional measure given the severe epidemic situation and our overriding mission to suppress this latest wave as soon as possible to safeguard the health of Hong Kong people. I am grateful to Members for their support and understanding.

"As a matter of fact, Members of the seventh-term LegCo have, since they took office on January 1, 2022, discharged their powers and functions in a

highly responsible manner, such as expeditiously approving the injection of \$27 billion into the Anti-epidemic Fund to provide timely relief to the businesses and individuals affected by the latest wave of the epidemic."

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will make full use of the staunch support of the Central Government and fight the epidemic with unwavering determination and strong faith.