

Chief Executive thanks LegCo Members and all sectors of community for supporting Government in fighting epidemic

The debate on the Motion of Thanks for the 2021 Policy Address is under way in the Legislative Council (LegCo), where the session on "Emerging from the Epidemic" ended yesterday (February 17). The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, expressed her gratitude to the LegCo Members for their support to the Government in fighting the fifth wave of the epidemic. She would continue to lead the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to join hands with all sectors of the community to overcome the disease in order for the people's lives to resume normal as soon as possible.

Mrs Lam said, "Members of the LegCo in the new term are proactive and pragmatic. Since the outbreak of the fifth wave of the epidemic, they have raised suggestions with me and various bureaux and departments; and at the first session of the debate held over the past two days, further offered constructive views including how to leverage the support of the Central Government. This is testimony to the rational interaction between the executive and the legislative under the improved electoral system of the HKSAR to achieve good governance.

"Owing to the characteristics of the virus, the scale and pace of the community outbreak have outgrown the capacities of the various parts of our anti-epidemic chain. I sincerely thank President Xi Jinping for his important instruction on the HKSAR's anti-epidemic efforts, the Vice Premier of the State Council Han Zheng for conveying to me the concern and support of the Central Government, as well as the Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council Xia Baolong for hosting a meeting in Shenzhen to co-ordinate the assistance for Hong Kong to fight the epidemic. The HKSAR Government is now working closely with the relevant ministries and commissions of the Central Authorities, as well as the Guangdong Provincial Government. Yesterday, we welcomed the arrival of a number of epidemiological experts, two mobile testing vehicles and a number of testing technical personnel from the Mainland to support us."

"Furthermore, in response to our appeal, various sectors of the community have joined the HKSAR's anti-epidemic team to work in concert with the Government personnel, demonstrating the unity of the Hong Kong people in overcoming challenges that come our way. I am deeply moved and encouraged," added Mrs Lam.

As regards isolation facilities, since Mrs Lam hosted an online webinar with The Federation of Hong Kong Hotel Owners and hotel owners on February 16, the trade response has been overwhelming. It is encouraging to see that so far 21 hotels have expressed their intention to turn into Community

Isolation Facility (CIF) hotels, providing more than 11 000 rooms. The Government will immediately assess the conditions of these hotels to ascertain their suitability for the relevant use, and work on the contractual and handover arrangements as soon as possible. Also taking into account some 4 400 rooms set to be in service soon, and some 5 500 rooms of the hotels that are in negotiations with the Government, over 20 000 rooms have been identified that could potentially become CIF hotels. This has exceeded by a large margin the Government's original target of 7 000 to 10 000 rooms. The first CIF hotel, Dorsett Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong, will commence operation today (February 18). The anti-epidemic task force set up by the Security Bureau is ready to take up the management of the facility and assist in admitting patients for isolation in an orderly manner.

Mrs Lam is also grateful for the positive response of the taxi industry, which has lined up a designated fleet of 300 taxis within a short period of time to provide transport service for patients who visit the designated clinics of the Hospital Authority from today onwards.

The demand for vaccination service has risen sharply these days. To ensure that members of the public, especially children, adolescents and the elderly, can receive vaccination as soon as possible, the Government is setting up more Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs), including the Satellite CVC at Leighton Centre in Causeway Bay, the three Pop-up CVCs at Tuen Mun Town Hall, Wo Hing Playground in Fanling and Sha Tin Town Hall respectively, the CVC at Hong Kong Central Library, and two new CVCs to be set up next week at Loke Yew Hall of The University of Hong Kong and Tsuen Wan Sports Centre respectively. The number of CVCs will thus increase to 23 by the end of this month, scaling up the average daily vaccination capacity to over 85 000 doses.

In addition, the HKSAR Government has mobilised more than 1 000 private clinics to provide vaccination service for more members of the public, especially the elderly. The Government is pleased to note that the number of doses administered in private clinics has significantly increased these days, peaking at about 40 000 doses per day. As for the elderly living in residential care homes, the Government is mobilising more healthcare workers and will streamline the health assessment and vaccination procedures to boost the vaccination rate at full steam in the coming weeks.

"The HKSAR Government will continue to mobilise all sectors of the community and all available manpower and resources, adopt all necessary measures, and assume the main responsibility to stabilise the epidemic situation early as the overriding mission at present, so as to lead Hong Kong out of the epidemic with concerted efforts. May I once again appeal to all members of the public to stay confident and support our anti-epidemic work," said Mrs Lam.