

## CS commends Contact Tracing Office for its efforts (with photos/video)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, today (March 18) visited the Contact Tracing Office (CTO) of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health at Kai Tak Community Hall to better understand the latest progress of tracing the contacts of COVID-19 confirmed cases and to give encouragement as well as recognition for the efforts of staff members in the office.

Accompanied by the Controller of the CHP, Dr Ronald Lam, Mr Cheung was briefed by staff members of the CTO on the latest work of tracing the contacts of confirmed cases.

Mr Cheung said he was pleased to note that in response to the cluster outbreak in a fitness centre in early March, the CTO took prompt action to speed up the process of identifying close contacts, making notable achievements. Since early March, the fitness centre cluster outbreak has resulted in 135 confirmed cases. The CTO successfully traced about 1 500 contacts in a few days' time and had them quarantined, and around 3 200 household contacts of close contacts were successfully traced and requested to undergo compulsory testing. In other words, for the fitness centre cluster, the CTO identified an average of about 35 contacts or family members for each confirmed case, much higher than the average of four contacts identified per confirmed case during the initial operation of the CTO. Such efforts have significantly helped in cutting chains of viral transmission. Over the past two weeks, the number of confirmed cases with unknown sources has largely remained at a single-digit level, proving the effectiveness of the work of the CTO.

Mr Cheung expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all the staff members of the CTO, including the officers temporarily seconded from the disciplined services (which include the Police Force, the Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department and the Fire Services Department), for their tireless efforts in contact tracing.

"The officers from the disciplined services, with experience in investigation, help conduct tracing with greater precision and efficiency in a professional and scientific manner. Their deployment also frees up the medical and nursing staff, who may then focus on conducting epidemiological investigations and make good use of the data collected in the investigations for further analysis," Mr Cheung said.

Since February, the Department of Health has expanded the contact tracing network to two tiers, i.e. in addition to tracing and putting the close contacts of each confirmed case under quarantine, the household members of the close contacts are now also required to undergo compulsory testing.

So far, the CTO has successfully helped trace over 14 000 close contacts

and advised more than 9 000 household contacts of close contacts to undergo compulsory testing.

