

CS visits Community Testing Centre at City Hall (with video)

To cut the transmission chain of COVID-19 in the community and to curtail the epidemic situation so that Hong Kong's economy and society as well as people's lives can return to normal as soon as possible, the Government will launch the Universal Community Testing Programme (UCTP) tomorrow (September 1) to provide a one-off free testing service for the public at 141 community testing centres. The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, accompanied by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, visited the Community Testing Centre at Hong Kong City Hall today (August 31) to inspect the readiness of the centre for the UCTP.

Mr Cheung was briefed by Mr Nip about the arrangements at the testing centre such as manpower allocation, the centre design which comprises the registration area, waiting area and specimen collection area, as well as the workflow at the testing center. Mr Cheung said he was pleased to learn that the entire workflow design was formulated in accordance with the social distancing principle. Mr Cheung was also briefed by Professor Chan about the implementation of infection control measures based on the recommendations of the Department of Health at the community testing centre, as well as the provision of protective equipment to personnel manning the centre. Mr Cheung was then briefed by staff members of the centre about the workflow of transporting the specimens from the community testing centres to the laboratory as well as the design of collection boxes installed with an electronic tracking device.

Currently, over 6 000 healthcare personnel have enrolled to participate in the UCTP. Some 4 000 government staff members from 75 bureaux and departments will also take up administrative support and management duties at the community testing centres.

Mr Cheung thanked the serving and retired civil servant colleagues as well as the healthcare personnel for their active participation in the preparation and management so that the community testing centres in various districts can be put into operation in the shortest amount of time.

"The preparations for the UCTP are now completed. Members of the public who have registered online can take the tests at the community testing centres starting from tomorrow. The design of the centres has ensured that the testing will be safe, convenient and quick with full protection of personal privacy," Mr Cheung said.

"The third wave of the epidemic has lasted for eight weeks. Although the epidemic has subsided recently, the proportion of cases with unknown sources remains high."

As at 2pm today, more than 526 000 people have registered for the UCTP.

"I appeal to members of the public to actively participate in the UCTP. The more people that participate in the programme, the higher the chances of identifying asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in the community and achieving the target of early isolation and early treatment. It will help break the invisible transmission chain in the community and contain the spread of the third wave of the epidemic so that social and economic activities can resume gradually and people's daily lives can resume as normal.

"With regard to the scaremongering and fallacious messages deliberately made by certain people to smear the testing programme and mislead the public, to smear the Mainland's anti-epidemic assistance offered to Hong Kong, and even to incite the public to boycott the programme in order to deter them from taking part in the programme, such acts should be condemned as they disregard the health of the public and fall short of the expectations of a large number of frontline staff members who have been working hard to the fight the virus.

"Members of the public should take great care to thoughtfully consider the news on the UCTP and refer to the information disseminated by the Government if in doubt. They should discern facts and not believe in rumours to avoid advocating such improper culture," he said.