

## EPD proactively co-ordinates and conducts "restriction-testing declaration" operations in "restricted area" (with photos/video)

The Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, today (March 5) said that, to help fight against the epidemic, the Environment Bureau (ENB) co-ordinated the sewage surveillance programme and in response to the Government's overall manpower requirement, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has mobilised about 30 per cent of staff members, involving over 800 people, to co-ordinate and conduct "restriction-testing declaration" (RTD) operations. The department also provides expert advice on environmental investigation of virus transmission. All members of the ENB and EPD are united and fully committed to anti-epidemic efforts.

Mr Wong yesterday (March 4) inspected the RTD operations conducted by the EPD in the "restricted area" in Tak Shan House and Tak Kei House of Tak Long Estate in Kowloon City, and showed support for the staff members. He said, "These two buildings have a large number of residents, with a total of over 3 600 persons. Counting only the manpower from the EPD, we have mobilised around 100 staff members and commenced the operation at 1pm. Yet our staff members arrived to conduct site inspection one day before the operation and supervised the setting up on the day of the operation. As the operation commenced, they arranged for thousands of residents to register and undergo testing as soon as possible. Anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines donated by the Central Government, rapid antigen test kits and food packs were distributed to the persons subject to compulsory testing to assist them in combating the virus. Upon completion of the RTD operations, colleagues have to arrange those persons tested preliminary positive to isolation facilities, and distribute extra food packs and daily necessities to assist those required to stay at home for quarantine. The entire operation, including transmission of preliminary positive cases to isolation facilities, usually takes over 30 hours.

"I would like to express my gratitude to our staff members, who work on the frontline and show their unwavering efforts in conducting the RTD operations in addition to their daily works, fully demonstrating team spirit. I would also thank those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With their co-operation as well as the efforts of various Government's departments and the testing contractors, the RTD operations can be run smoothly."

Since the end of January, the ENB and EPD co-ordinated and conducted about 30 RTD operations in around five weeks (constituting more than one-third of all the RTD operations carried out in territory in the same period). The operations covered different buildings, including private housing, flats

under Home Ownership Scheme and public housing estates. More than 2 000 person-time of staff members were mobilised to conduct testing for over 46 000 person-time, and over 2 700 preliminarily positive cases were detected.

The EPD has set up eight anti-epidemic teams since May last year to conduct compulsory testing work in various districts with positive sewage testing results. In view of the rapid development of the fifth wave of the epidemic, the EPD swiftly expanded the anti-epidemic teams from eight teams to 40 teams in January this year and the number of participating personnel has been gradually increasing. Colleagues from the Administrative Officer grade, the Environmental Protection Officer grade and the Environmental Protection Inspector grade as well as other grades and civilian staff joined the task force to assist in executing anti-epidemic duties on the frontline.

"In addition, the EPD colleagues also draw on their professional knowledge to launch the sewage surveillance plan of Hong Kong in 2020. The 400-member sewage testing team formed by the EPD, the Drainage Services Department and the University of Hong Kong, etc, has been working to apply scientific knowledge to help fight the epidemic. Meanwhile, the EPD's environmental science experts provide professional advice on virus transmission in the environment and utilise their skills in the fight against the epidemic," Mr Wong said.

With the staunch support of the Central Government, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is making all-out efforts to fight the epidemic. The ENB and EPD will continue to fully support anti-epidemic work, including the Compulsory Universal Testing to be conducted later.

