

FHB met testing agencies of community testing centres

The Food and Health Bureau met the testing agencies of the community testing centres on December 17 to exchange views on the latest overall testing strategy of the Government under the local fourth wave of epidemic as well as the operation of the community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan also joined part of the meeting. Mrs Lam expressed gratitude to the testing agencies for making every effort to fight the virus in unison with the Government and the public throughout the severe epidemic, including mobilising resources under an emergency situation and setting up the community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations in a short period of time.

The Government has been stepping up surveillance and testing efforts in a multi-pronged approach. In order to identify cases in the community as early as possible to help cut the transmission chains, specified persons are required to undergo compulsory testing on a mandatory basis. On the other hand, the Government also encourages members of the public to undergo testing on an obligatory basis and on a voluntary basis through the Targeted Group Testing Scheme.

The community testing centres provide self-paid testing services for the public at a more affordable price to serve general community or private purposes such as certification for travelling or work. Testing would also, as and when necessary (such as in situations with higher risks of community transmission), be conducted for target groups, specified persons or other members of the public at the testing centres for public health reasons on a needs basis. The Government also arranges for testing agencies to provide free testing services through mobile specimen collection stations in districts with a number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, with a view to facilitating and encouraging residents of the districts or individuals who perceive themselves as having a higher risk of exposure to undergo testing.

Currently, 18 community testing centres have commenced service on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West, providing testing services for over 10 000 persons per day. Coupled with the community testing centre to commence service soon at Ngau Tau Kok Road Sports Centre, the total daily testing capacity will exceed 20 000 tests.

Since their opening from November 15, in the past month (as at December 15), community testing centres had provided testing service for about 245 000 persons, of which 477 samples tested preliminarily positive (0.19 per cent) and had been referred to the Centre for Health Protection for confirmatory tests and follow-up. From November 23 to December 15, the Government had set up a total of 17 mobile specimen collection stations or specimen bottle

distribution point, which provided testing service for a total of more than 103 000 persons, of which 112 samples tested preliminarily positive (0.11 per cent).

To fight against COVID-19, the Government and the public must stand in solidarity to fight the virus. The spokesman appealed to all members of the public who have doubts about their health condition to undergo testing to protect oneself and others and to fight the virus together.