

Government's response to media enquiries on deployment of civil servants in anti-epidemic work

In response to media enquiries on the deployment of civil servants to participate in the testing operations, a spokesman for the Government gave the following reply today (January 29):

In late November last year, the epidemic situation in Hong Kong developed into the fourth wave of outbreak. As of today, although the situation has eased, it remains severe. The Government must take decisive actions and respond swiftly to combat the epidemic. In this regard, it is the duty of all government departments and civil servants at all levels to participate in the anti-epidemic work.

Colleagues of the Home Affairs Department and the Department of Health played an essential role during the compulsory testing operation at the specified "restricted area" in Jordan last week. Moreover, around 3 000 civil servants including staff of both the disciplined services and civilian grades from the Housing Department, the Labour Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Drainage Services Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and the Water Supplies Department participated in the operation. They made every effort in helping the registration work and the distribution of supplies in the area.

The preparation for this operation was intense as it required the deployment of large amount of manpower in a very short period of time. Colleagues from various departments worked together and completed their mission by working zealously day and night so as to safeguard public health. They conducted 3 650 home visits, collected specimen door to door for homes for the aged and other people with impaired mobility in the area, provided food pack and cleansing consumables to residents, delivered hot meals to elderly in need, and also arranged places for rest to people without accommodation in the area. The operation was smoothly conducted, not only because of the co-operation of the some 7 000 residents in the "restricted area" and the set up of temporary specimen collection stations by the contractors, but also the efforts of the civil service colleagues involved.

Virus testing will continue to be an important part of the Government's effort in containing the epidemic. As the Chief Executive has pointed out, the Government must be more proactive in this regard with a view to identifying the asymptomatic carriers still in the community within the shortest possible time. The Government will not rule out the need to conduct compulsory testing in different areas in various scales or forms at short notice. Therefore, the Government has already requested all departments to make adequate preparations in terms of manpower and resources allocation such that they can mobilise their staff under a short timeframe to take part in

the anti-epidemic operations and handle unforeseen needs.

Departments would be happy to answer any questions from colleagues regarding the manpower planning of relevant operations. However, any misinformation or false allegations disclosed by colleagues would not only impair the Government's efforts in fighting against the epidemic, but also the image of the civil service, which is unfair to participating colleagues. The Government reiterates that it is the duty of all departments and civil servants to participate in anti-epidemic work. We believe that majority of civil servants would, with public interest in mind, share the common goal and would like to participate in relevant operations with their best effort, in order for the epidemic to end in Hong Kong as soon as possible.