

# Hospital Authority expands coverage of special allowance

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Amid the rapidly evolving COVID-19 epidemic, the numbers of patients seeking consultations and confirmed patients have surged recently. The Hospital Authority (HA) Board today (February 10) approved to expand the coverage of the special allowance to cater for operational needs and recognise the hardship of staff under the prevailing outbreak crisis.

"Since last August, the HA has provided a special allowance to healthcare workers deployed to designated locations, which include the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre and the community treatment and community isolation facilities at AsiaWorld-Expo and Penny's Bay respectively, which are currently caring for COVID-19 patients," an HA spokesman said.

"To cope with the rapid increase in confirmed patients recently, all public hospitals have made every effort to activate the first- and second-tier isolation facilities in the hospitals to support patient admission, especially for those with more serious conditions. The current occupancy rates are almost saturated. In addition, in light of the community testing situation, Accident and Emergency Departments have to deal with a large number of patients with positive preliminary test results, while the workload of laboratories, inter alia, has also increased heavily."

The spokesman added that some healthcare staff will also be deployed to perform duties in facilities outside the hospitals with the ongoing addition of community treatment and isolation facilities.

Meanwhile, the HA is finalising the details of the coverage of the special allowance, which is currently \$500 per day or 20 per cent of the daily basic salary, whichever is higher, for staff being deployed to the areas covered by the special allowance. The HA will communicate with staff on details of the arrangement through internal newsletters and circulars in due course.

The HA again expresses its gratitude to all frontline staff for their unflinching and concerted efforts in the battle against the epidemic during this difficult moment.