LCQ1: Community Isolation Facility Hotel Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 4):

Question:

To cope with the fifth wave of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the Government has earlier on launched the Community Isolation Facility Hotel Scheme (the Scheme), under which participating hotels are designated for community isolation facility (CIF) purpose. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the average and weekly utilisation rates of each CIF hotel;

(2) of the average, lowest and highest market room rates of the CIF hotels;

(3) of the expenses involved in renting hotel rooms, with a breakdown by name of hotel;

(4) of the expected occupancy rate of the Scheme, and whether the actual occupancy rate has reached the expected level; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(5) as it is reported that some long-stay guests have been affected as a result of the relevant hotels participating in the Scheme, of the number of requests for assistance received by the Government, and the measures taken to assist such guests?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Security Bureau, the reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Alice Mak is as follows:

In light of the fifth wave of COVID-19, the Government will, depending on the health risk, care needs and transmission risk in the household, make arrangements for infected persons according to the multi-tiered triage and treatment strategy for suitable treatment and isolation. Those asymptomic persons who do not require medical support but have to be isolated somewhere other than their household due to their care needs or household environment will be admitted to community isolation facilities (CIFs) to reduce the risk of transmission.

In response to the substantial increase of confirmed cases in early

February this year, the Government has been making every effort to increase the supply of CIFs in various ways to meet the demand, including engaging commercial hotels and inviting the hotel industry to participate actively. According to the CIF Hotel Scheme, if the participating hotel provides hardware facilities without staffing support in the operation, the Government will use the hotel at a rate of $1,000 per room per night; if the participating hotel fully assists in the operation, including the provision of hardware facilities and staffing support, etc, the Government will pay at the rate of $1,600 per room per night.

The occupancy rate of hotels that are used as CIF is subject to various factors, including changes in the epidemic situation. Individual hotels have once recorded occupancy rate of over 90 per cent. As of April 25, the CIF hotels have admitted over 14 000 persons in total for isolation. In view of the rapid development of the epidemic, the occupancy rate of CIF hotels at a particular moment cannot accurately reflect the actual situation.

Having regard to the utilisation of CIFs, the Government has made timely adjustment to redeploy CIF hotels for other appropriate uses, such as dormitory for Mainland medical support team, dormitory for staff of Hospital Authority and staff of residential care homes for the elderly during the epidemic, and designated quarantine hotel, etc. The overall expenditure for the Government to engage hotels as CIFs depends on the development of the epidemic and the actual situation. As the epidemic has not yet come to an end, the specific amount of the expenditure involved cannot be provided at this stage.

The Government received a few requests for assistance from some guests staying with hotels on a long term basis as the hotels were being turned into CIFs. As the matter involved the tenancy relationship between the hotels and their guests, the Government did not have a direct role to play. The Government understands that the hotels interested in participating as CIF have already made reasonable arrangements for their original guests.