

SCS meets with civil service unions on anti-epidemic work

The Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, met with representatives from the four central civil service consultative councils and the four major service-wide staff unions today (March 11) to elaborate on the overall anti-epidemic strategies of the Government and government employees' engagement in anti-epidemic work, as well as to listen to the views and concerns from the staff side representatives.

"To fight against the severe epidemic situation, the Government will mobilise all manpower and resources as far as feasible, and will take all necessary measures. The entire civil service stands in solidarity and attaches utmost importance to the fight against the epidemic. During the fifth wave of the epidemic, our colleagues are required to hold the frontlines as well as to offer backend support in various aspects of the anti-epidemic strategy, including supporting 'restriction-testing declaration' operations, expanding the vaccination programme, speeding up contact tracing, setting up and managing community isolation facilities, co-ordinating the delivery and distribution of supplies, supporting persons under home quarantine, etc. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the large number of colleagues in the Government who have displayed exemplary diligence in the fight against the epidemic. Their dedication has proven inaccurate criticisms targeting the civil service wrong. In fact, government employees should oblige to departmental arrangements and take part in the anti-epidemic effort, no matter what their original/usual duties are," Mr Nip said.

"The Government will provide frontline anti-epidemic staff with appropriate and adequate protective equipment and measures. Relevant briefings will be held before operations and guidelines and videos on the donning and doffing of personal protective equipment uploaded by health authorities will be provided to our colleagues for reference in advance. Testing will also be arranged after operations to staff members in need," Mr Nip continued.

He encouraged government staff to continue to work in unity and to spare no effort in jointly assuming the main responsibilities in curbing the epidemic.

Besides, having regard to the latest advice from health authorities, the Civil Service Bureau issued guidelines today providing that staff members who are regarded as a close contact of a positive case can resume duty at the workplace upon completion of quarantine as directed, without needing to wait for their household members to recover or complete isolation. The guidelines also state that under the fifth wave of the epidemic, government employees who have undergone isolation as directed and recovered will not be required to undergo isolation again even if tested positive again. Heads of

Departments may make suitable work arrangement for such cases having regard to individual circumstances.

From the beginning of the fifth wave of the epidemic to March 10, there were around 28 600 COVID-19 cases among government employees, of which over 8 000 have resumed duty. The remaining employees will resume duty upon recovery or completion of isolation according to the directions of the Department of Health.