

## SFH inspects Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre to ensure preparation in tackling COVID-19 epidemic (with photos)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, inspected Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre today (December 29) to learn more about the preparation made by the Centre in tackling the COVID-19 epidemic, so as to ensure a contingency plan is in place for possible change in the epidemic situation.

She received a briefing from colleagues of the Civil Aid Service (CAS) and the Department of Health (DH) on the current operation of the Centre, including the number of units, the latest occupancy rate, the arrangement of suitable units to cater for different needs of people staying there, and the enhancement in cleaning efficiency in order to increase the turnover rate of the units.

Professor Chan said, "The global pandemic situation is rapidly worsening due to the Omicron variant and the number of imported cases in Hong Kong is on the rise. According to figures from the Centre for Health Protection of the DH, over 90 per cent of the confirmed cases recorded on December 26 and 27 were related to the Omicron variant.

"In view of the growing threat posed by the Omicron variant, the Government will continue to employ the most stringent measures in guarding against importation of cases in order to manage and defend against the importation risks posed by Omicron cases. Overseas places where Omicron cases have been detected that may lead to local transmission and exportation of cases will be specified as Group A specified places. Meanwhile, the Government will also closely monitor whether there is prevalent transmission of Omicron cases in overseas places and impose more stringent and enhanced surveillance measures on Group A places with enhanced surveillance from which imported Omicron cases were detected. Relevant measures include requiring persons arriving at Hong Kong from these Group A places with enhanced surveillance to undergo compulsory quarantine at a quarantine centre for the first four days of arrival at Hong Kong and to undergo daily testing in the first seven days of their arrival.

"I noticed that Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre, as a key quarantine facility in Hong Kong and a crucial line of defence against the importation of cases, has geared up in preparation and implemented response measures. The workload there is much heavier these days given the rising number of people arriving at Hong Kong and close contacts of confirmed cases staying in the Centre recently. I wish to extend my appreciation to the staff serving there, including those from the DH, the CAS, the Auxiliary Medical Service, the Hong

Kong Police Force and the Fire Services Department, for their dedication and devotion to their work in the fight against the pandemic."

Professor Chan convened a meeting last Thursday (December 23) to discuss with officials from the Food and Health Bureau, the DH and the Hospital Authority on the contingency plans regarding the possible emergence of a fifth wave. The plans cover various response measures, including the immediate strengthening of testing, quarantine, isolation, treatment and social distancing measures, to be activated swiftly when needed.

"At present, we are constantly reviewing and adjusting the anti-epidemic control measures and strategies, with a view to guarding against the importation of cases and the resurgence of local infection as well as attaining the goal of dynamic 'zero infection'," she emphasised.

