

Transcript of remarks by SCS and SFH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, on the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme at a media session today (February 26) after visiting the Community Vaccination Centre at the Exhibition Gallery of the Hong Kong Central Library:

Reporter: With the delayed arrival of the BioNTech vaccine, will there also be a significant delay in the time of roll out of this kind of vaccine to public? With three extra centres added now, looking at the current demand, is there a need to add even more centres? Second question, in future will civil servants also be required to love the Chinese Communist Party?

Secretary for the Civil Service: I think I'd confine to questions relating to the vaccination programme. Regarding the arrival of the BioNTech vaccine, the original scheduled day was Thursday. The latest scheduled arrival day is tomorrow, and we hope that the vaccine would arrive in Hong Kong as scheduled. I don't think there is a significant delay in the arrival, so it would not have significant impact on our vaccination programme. As regards the demand for vaccination, whether for Sinovac vaccine or BioNTech vaccine, the number of community vaccination centres we have planned for, and also the private clinics network, are sufficient for the planned capacity to have the population vaccinated. So as we operate the centres, we would closely monitor the situation, assess the demand and make necessary adjustments, just like we've recently decided to add three additional community vaccination centres for about two months for Sinovac vaccine because we noticed that there is overwhelming response and many people would like to get vaccinated early. So we've responded to this demand and we made the arrangement as best as we can and hope that we could continue to launch the programme in a safe, orderly manner, rest assured that the number of vaccines that we purchased and expected to arrive in Hong Kong is sufficient. So there is no shortage of stock. It is a matter of how we organise the vaccination in accordance with the priority groups and also in accordance with the operation experience, and we can adjust the plan accordingly.

Reporter: ... make vaccination compulsory for travel?

Secretary for the Civil Service: The vaccination is, we have to get the informed consent to get vaccinated. After you get vaccinated, whether there are rooms for relaxation of social distancing measures or any relaxation or criteria for international or cross-boundary travel, etc, I think it is a matter that is of immense interest, but it is a matter that we have to look at it carefully. And the international community including the airport community and the airline industries, I am sure that they are looking into it based on science and evidence-based considerations. So we would monitor it.

Secretary for Food and Health: I would also like to give additional information to Patrick's comment about the additional centres. As we all

know, in next week, private general practitioners (GPs) will start their vaccination programme. Some of them are also collaborating with the District Health Centre in Kwai Tsing District. When the GPs start their vaccination programme next week, a number of GPs will be collaborating with the District Health Centre.

Reporter: Can you offer more details on the contingency plans for side effects that you mentioned? What if the residents develop any side effects on-site and what if they reached home?

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, after people have been vaccinated, they will be observed at the vaccination centre for 30 minutes. So if there are any side effects or people feel unwell, the healthcare professionals on-site will take care of them. If you look at the product information, there are some very common side effects, for example there are some pains at injection sites or sometimes people will feel a bit tired. These are very common and transient, therefore it will go away very soon. But if they feel that they have some sustained unwellness, I would advise that people should go to consult their doctors. If there is anything that is of adverse events and the healthcare professionals or doctors feel that we need to be notified, we have already started a notification system by the Department of Health to register all the adverse events after vaccination. They are also collaborating with the University of Hong Kong to initiate the surveillance of the adverse events from people who were vaccinated. At the same time, in this afternoon, we will be going to the LegCo Finance Committee to seek funding for the indemnity fund for vaccination.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)