

Transcript of remarks by SCS (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, on the Universal Community Testing Programme at a media session this afternoon (September 1):

Reporter: First, we do see a sign that some of the testing centres may be fully booked, but then many people ended up not going. So what do you have to say to these people who didn't show up? And are you expecting a great discrepancy between the actual sign up numbers and the participation numbers? And is it likely that in the end the actual participation rate is quite low?

Second question, with regard to the increased quota for these testing centres. Will the quota be increased across the board for all testing centres or will it be for the more popular ones? And would more people going for test and in each session, will that actually increase the risk and how are the authorities going to handle that increased risk in a way?

Third question, will the Government be extending the scheme to perhaps next week too? And because those were enthusiastic to get tested, they probably have signed up already. So, will the Government roll out any initiative to may be encourage participation more? Because the number seem to be not going up as rapidly as we think it would be. Thank you.

Secretary for the Civil Service: Thank you very much. Three questions. As regard the first one, actually the turn up rate is pretty good today. It is more than 90 per cent, so people who made the booking actually turned up and received the testing.

Second question is about the increase in quotas. Basically, we reviewed the operational experience today, and also assessed the throughput made by the medical and healthcare team. And we come to the view that there is room for further increase in the total capacity. Hence, we will increase the number of quotas available for booking across the board for all centres. So particularly for those centres that already fully booked for the seven days, starting from September 3 onwards, there would be more booking quotas available. So people could actually go online tomorrow and can find that for those fully booked centres, there would be places available. So I appeal for early booking for those who are interested in receiving the test.

The third one, about the risk, as you can see, the testing centres basically are very spacious, have good ventilation and good social distancing measures. The healthcare teams are all equipped with adequate personal protective equipment. So all the arrangements suggested that actually the risk is minimal. We considered that even with the increase in quota, it should be very suitable for conducting the testing.

As regards whether the programme will be extended for beyond seven days, we would closely monitor and review the operational experience today and tomorrow. And then we will make an assessment. As you mentioned, those who are very keen to receive the test would probably sign up. There might be people who are hesitant, worried about the process, whether it would be very painful, or receiving some sort of information that is not accurate. But I am sure that by observing the actual operation today, I hope that they would come forward and sign up early. So we would closely monitor the situation, the operational experience today and tomorrow, and then we will make a decision.

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