

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1521/19-20

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HS

Panel on Health Services

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Tuesday, 10 March 2020, at 10:00 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** :
- Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon CHAN Hoi-yan (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
 - Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
 - Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
 - Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
 - Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP
 - Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
 - Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
 - Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
 - Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
 - Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
 - Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
 - Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
 - Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
 - Hon CHU Hoi-dick
 - Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
 - Hon SHIU Ka-chun
 - Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
 - Hon KWONG Chun-yu
- Members attending** :
- Hon IP Kin-yuen
 - Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
 - Hon HO Kai-ming
 - Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, HM
 - Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP

Member absent : Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Item I

Prof Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP
Secretary for Food and Health

Ms Leonie LEE Hoi-lun
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Health)1

Dr Constance CHAN Hon-ye, JP
Director of Health

Dr WONG Ka-hing, JP
Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

Dr K L CHUNG
Director (Quality & Safety)
Hospital Authority

Dr Vivien CHUANG
Chief Manager (Infection, Emergency & Contingency)
Hospital Authority

Mr Harry LIN Ting-yan
Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce &
Economic Development (Commerce & Industry)1

Mr Tommy YUEN Man-chung, JP
Director (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs) Special Duties
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Ms Ada CHAN Man-yan
Principal Assistant Secretary (Constitutional
& Mainland Affairs)8

Ms Cynthia CHAN Chin-woon
Principal Education Officer (Special Duties)
Education Bureau

Miss Vega WONG Sau-wai, JP
Deputy Director of Home Affairs (2)

Ms Ida LEE Bik-sai, JP
Deputy Director of Leisure & Cultural Services
(Leisure Services)

Mr TAN Tick-yee
Assistant Director (Elderly)
Social Welfare Department

Miss Hinny LAM Shuk-yee
Deputy Secretary for Security 3

Miss Helen TANG, JP
Deputy Director of Government Logistics

Clerk in attendance : Ms Maisie LAM
Chief Council Secretary (2) 5

Staff in attendance : Miss Kay CHU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Mr Ronald LAU
Council Secretary (2) 5

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 5

Action

I. Measures for the prevention and control of Coronavirus Disease in Hong Kong

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)585/19-20(01) to (02), CB(2)600/19-20(01), CB(2)627/19-20(01) to (03) and CB(2)673/19-20(01) to (03)]

Members noted the following letters on the meeting arrangements:

- (a) two joint letters dated 4 February 2020 from 22 Members on the meeting arrangements (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)585/19-20(01) and CB(2)627/19-20(01));
- (b) two reply letters to the joint letters dated 4 February 2020 from 22 Members (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)585/19-20(02) and CB(2)600/19-20(01)); and

- (c) two joint letters dated 24 and 28 February 2020 respectively from 22 Members on the meeting arrangements (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)627/19-20(02) and (03)).

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH") briefed members on the latest situation and measures being taken by the Administration to prevent and control the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") in Hong Kong, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)673/19-20(01)).

3. Members noted the letter dated 9 March 2020 from Dr Pierre CHAN to SFH (LC Paper No. CB(2)673/19-20(03)) and the updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)673/19-20(02)) on the subject under discussion.

Immigration control and port health measures

4. Holding the view that the arrangement of extending the health declaration to all inbound travellers at the Hong Kong International Airport ("HKIA") since 8 March 2020 was far from effective to reduce the risk of importation of COVID-19 cases amid the growing number of confirmed cases reported across more than 90 countries and areas, Dr Helena WONG urged the Administration to impose a complete closure of all immigration control points. Dr Fernando CHEUNG held a similar view, adding that the Administration had all along been dragging its feet in coming up with a swift response to deter the importation of cases. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr KWONG Chun-yu opined that the Chief Executive should not be complacent with the current relatively low number of confirmed cases (i.e. 115 cases) which, in their view, was an achievement of all Hong Kong residents who had stayed vigilant since the outbreak of the disease. Noting that there were no new confirmed cases in Guangdong Province in the past few days, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen surmised whether there was any under-reporting and sought clarification from the Administration as to whether it was planning to relax the 14-day compulsory quarantine arrangement on people arriving at Hong Kong from specified places in the Mainland.

5. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok queried about the Administration's latest risk assessment in view of the outbreak of the disease in different countries and regions and the emergence of imported cases from some overseas places where the number of confirmed cases had not been running high (e.g. India). Ms Elizabeth QUAT urged the Administration to keep monitoring the situation and tightening the immigration control measures as and when necessary. Mr POON Siu-ping sought elaboration about the factors the Administration would consider in determining whether arrivals from that place would need to be subject to quarantine orders under the Prevention

and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A). Noting that the Mainland had only recorded 17 and two confirmed cases in Wuhan and other two Provinces respectively on 9 March 2020 but the number of confirmed cases in a number of overseas places was of a record high, Mr CHAN Han-pan considered that the Administration should adjust its existing immigration control measures based on public health risks. Mr HO Kai-ming expressed regret that Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen had used the term "Wuhan pneumonia" instead of "COVID-19" during the discussion at the meeting. He surmised that the official number of confirmed cases reported by those overseas places which adopted a mitigation but not a containment approach might not reflect the whole picture of the situation.

6. SFH advised that the Centre for Health Protection ("CHP") of the Department of Health ("DH") had been conducting risk assessment on a daily basis taking into account a basket of factors, including the number of cases, distribution and increase in number of cases, surveillance and control measures put in place by the health authorities concerned, and the frequency of travels between Hong Kong and that particular country or region. To prevent the spreading of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, the Administration had, among others, issued health travel advice to various destinations, Red Outbound Travel Alert on certain high-risk countries, and quarantine orders to require Hong Kong residents who had been to Daegu and Gyeongsangbuk-do in Korea and all arrivals who had been to the Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy or Veneto regions in Italy or Iran in the past 14 days to stay in quarantine centre for quarantine. At present, the entry restrictions imposed on residents of Hubei Province and persons who had visited Hubei Province in the preceding 14 days before arrival in Hong Kong and the requirement that all persons having stayed in the Mainland for any period during the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong would be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days in accordance with the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) remained unchanged.

7. Referring to the high number of confirmed cases in many overseas countries, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan was concerned that for non-Hong Kong residents, only those arriving from Korea had been barred entry with effect from 25 February 2020. She considered that the Administration should impose entry restrictions on non-Hong Kong residents arriving from all high-risk countries, or at the very least, require these arrivals to provide a health certificate from the authorities concerned. SFH advised that the Administration would review and suitably rationalize the immigration control measures based on the development of the evolving epidemic. Given that there was an incubation period for COVID-19, it was considered that the present arrangement of subjecting arrivals from high-risk overseas places to 14-day quarantine at quarantine centre was more appropriate.

8. In response to Dr Helena WONG and the Chairman's concern over the daily number of arrivals, Deputy Secretary for Security 3 ("DS for S") advised that the relevant statistics had been published on the website of the Immigration Department ("ImmD"). On 9 March 2020, the number of arrivals via HKIA was 10 633, which represented a significant drop from the daily average of some 57 000 for the month of January 2020. Among those arrivals, 8 304 (about 80%) were Hong Kong residents.

9. Referring to the different views expressed by Members on whether there should be a complete closure of borders, Mr SHIU Ka-fai remarked that the existing arrangement to exempt cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers from the quarantine requirement was necessary in order to ensure the supply of goods or services required for the daily needs of the people in Hong Kong. He asked whether there were any confirmed cases involving cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers. SFH replied in the negative.

10. The Chairman remarked that those Hong Kong manufacturers with factories in the Mainland had genuine need to travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland to support the operation and business of the factories. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked whether consideration could be given to subjecting those manufacturers returned from the Mainland to viral testing such that those who were tested negative would not be required to observe the 14-day quarantine requirement. SFH advised that under Cap. 599C, the Chief Secretary for Administration might designate any person or category of persons fulfilling certain criteria for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement.

Compulsory quarantine facilities and surveillance work

11. Mr POON Siu-ping was concerned about whether the existing quarantine centres could meet the foreseeable increase in the number of persons subject to quarantine orders. SFH advised that to cope with the requirements for asymptomatic close contacts with the confirmed cases and occasional clusters, quarantine facilities were being constructed in Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village in Chai Wan, Junior Police Call Permanent Activity Centre in Pat Heung and the government site at Penny's Bay.

12. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked about the surveillance work and enforcement actions carried out by the Administration to ensure that people who were subject to the 14-day home compulsory quarantine under Cap. 599C would not leave the place of quarantine. SFH advised that the Administration had conducted more than 5 000 surprise checks, placed calls to relevant persons and shared real-time location via communications software. The Administration had so far initiated prosecution against two

persons for suspected violation of the requirement. Another seven cases were under investigation.

13. Mr YIU Si-wing urged the Administration to inform the hotels concerned if persons subject to home quarantine had opted to undergo the 14-day compulsory quarantine at their premises such that the hotels could take necessary precautionary measures to reduce the health risk. Referring to the list of buildings of confinees subject to compulsory quarantine according to the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) ("the list") published online by the Administration, Dr Helena WONG considered that the list should be updated on a daily basis with the buildings grouped by districts to facilitate navigation. In addition, the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") should update the Housing Department, owners' corporations or management companies concerned in a timely manner such that the latter could raise tenants' awareness of the situation and enhance the environmental hygiene.

14. SFH advised that CHP had maintained communication with HAD on persons undergoing home quarantine. Regarding the update on the list, Director of Health ("DoH") advised that the number of confinees could be more than 2 000 in a single day. The Administration would endeavour to release the latest information as soon as practicable.

Surveillance and testing for COVID-19

15. Referring to the extended Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme ("the Surveillance Programme") whereby free testing for COVID-19 would be provided by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch ("PHLSB") of CHP for respiratory specimens collected from patients presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms at clinics of private doctors and sent to PHLSB via accredited private microbiology laboratories, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan urged the Administration to make it clear to members of the public that patients had to bear the consultation fees, if any, charged by the clinics concerned. Mr POON Siu-ping asked how the Administration could improve the participation rate of private clinics under the Surveillance Programme. Dr Fernando CHEUNG was concerned that some private doctors had indicated that the implementation details of the Surveillance Programme, such as the storage and delivery of specimens and the list of accredited private laboratories, was not clear enough.

16. Controller, CHP advised that CHP had issued letters on 6 March 2020 to private doctors on the extension of the Surveillance Programme with effective from 9 March 2020 with a view to minimizing the risk of community transmission. CHP would closely monitor the situation and render necessary assistance to private clinics.

17. Referring to the rapid diagnostic test recently developed by Taiwan whereby test results would be available in about 15 minutes by identifying the presence of antibodies in specimens, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked whether the Administration would liaise with Taiwan in this regard to enhance the testing capacity in Hong Kong. Mr CHAN Han-pan was concerned about the availability of more rapid and reliable viral test. Mr POON Siu-ping raised a similar concern. The Chairman asked about the turnaround time of the existing viral tests adopted by CHP and HA.

18. Controller, CHP advised that PHLSB would carefully evaluate the assays developed by local tertiary institutions and scientific research institutions to determine how to make the best use of these assays and whether to introduce them in public service delivery after assessment of their sensitivity and accuracy and other relevant factors. At present, the real-time reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction assays adopted by PHLSB would have the results be available within a few hours from specimen receipt.

Response measures of HA

19. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan sought information about HA's stockpile of personal protective equipment ("PPE"), including surgical masks, for frontline healthcare personnel of public hospitals. Mr KWONG Chun-yu said that to his understanding, individual public hospitals, such as United Hospitals, were facing a shortage of N95 respirators and isolation gowns. He requested HA to advise on the stockpile of PPE in each cluster.

20. Director (Quality & Safety), HA ("D(Q&S), HA") supplemented that HA had since 15 February 2020 set out in its COVID-19 Bulletin the weekly updated stockpile of PPE to keep staff informed of the latest situation. As at 6 March 2020, HA maintained a stockpile of about 24 million surgical masks, 2.6 million isolation gowns, 1.1 million face shields and 1.1 million N95 respirators. Under the latest average depletion of PPE as reference, the stockpile of N95 respirator was anticipated to last for about four weeks, whereas that of other PPE items would last for more than one to two months. The occasional shortage of some PPE in individual hospitals might be due to the time lag in replenishing the stock. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about HA's source of procurement of N95 respirator, D(Q&S), HA advised that HA had in the past procured N95 respirators from the United States. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked whether there had been any occasions that frontline staff of HA were in lack of PPE for the carrying out of their duties. D(Q&S), HA replied in the negative.

21. Prof Joseph LEE was gravely concerned that while there was no change in the transmission mode of the virus, HA had revised its infection control guidelines, which covered the PPE to be worn by clinical staff when carrying out different clinical procedures, eight times during the period from 21 January to 5 March 2020. SFH stressed that any infection control guidelines formulated by HA would make reference to, among others, relevant international guidelines (e.g. guidelines promulgated by the World Health Organization) and expert advice. D(Q&S), HA supplemented that since the global demand for PPE would remain high, HA had been encouraging its staff to have a rational use of PPE.

22. Referring to paragraph 15 of the Administration's paper which revealed that as at 8 March 2020, 954 isolation beds were being used in public hospitals with an occupancy rate of around 30% and the earlier claim of the Administration in January 2020 that HA could deploy some 1 400 isolation beds for use during the epidemic, Prof Joseph LEE sought clarification on the number of isolation beds available in public hospitals. He was concerned about whether training would be provided for frontline general ward staff deployed to serve in the retrofitted standard negative pressure wards, if any.

23. SFH advised that in response to the changes in situation, HA was planning to retrofit one to two general wards in each cluster into standard negative pressure wards, with a view to providing 400 to 500 additional standard negative pressure beds for patients who were recovering but have not yet been confirmed negative for the virus. D(Q&S), HA supplemented that the redevelopment of Kwong Wah Hospital and the renovation work of Tuen Mun Hospital had made some 200 isolation beds not available for use. It was expected that a total of 1 200-odd isolation beds could be opened to meet the service demand. Apart from isolation wards, surveillance wards had been set up in public hospitals since 31 January 2020 for HA's patients with pneumonia, who were required to undergo virus testing under the Surveillance Programme, to stay therein until the test results were available.

24. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed support for the additional funding of \$4.7 billion under the Anti-epidemic Fund for HA to provide, among others, Special Rental Allowance for staff working in high risk areas with temporary accommodation needs under the Emergency Response Level and Special Emergency Response Allowance to recognize frontline staff engaging in high risk duties in response to the epidemic. He asked whether HA would introduce other forms of allowance for those staff who had to take up extra workload due to the epidemic but were not eligible for the above two special allowances.

25. D(Q&S), HA advised that HA would flexibly deploy the additional funding on various fronts, including for personnel-related expenditure for frontline staff, procuring additional PPE, enhancing support for laboratory testing and procuring drug and medical equipment, etc. Specifically, HA had since 24 February 2020 introduced the Special Emergency Response Allowance, which was set at 20% of the daily basic salary of the staff concerned with a minimum rate of \$500 per day, for frontline staff engaging in high risk duties under the Emergency Responses Level. To encourage more staff to work during the epidemic with significant increase in workload, HA had also adjusted the rate of Special Honorarium Scheme by a 20% increase.

26. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the progress of recruiting additional part-time staff to strengthen HA's workforce, D(Q&S), HA advised that as of 5 March 2020, HA had processed 174 out of the 199 applications from locum doctors, with 66 of them having been deployed to serve 13 different specialties.

27. In view of the tight manpower of HA, Dr Fernando CHEUNG cast doubt on the appropriateness of deploying healthcare personnel of HA to assist in collecting respiratory specimens from people put under quarantine at the quarantine centre at Chun Yeung Estate for viral tests. SFH advised that the participation of the HA staff concerned was on a voluntary basis.

28. Noting that there were cases whereby the discharged persons had retested positive and the incubation period of some cases had been longer than expected, Ms Starry LEE asked whether medical surveillance would be arranged for discharged persons and people who had completed the 14-day compulsory quarantine period to monitor their health condition. SFH advised that health advice would be provided to the said persons. D(Q&S), HA stressed that HA had adopted stringent discharge criteria for confirmed COVID-19 cases. Recovered patients of COVID-19 would be advised to rest adequately before getting back to work. Their health conditions would be monitored during follow-up consultations. Given the highly sensitivity of the viral test, residual virus left in the body of the recovery patients, even in small amount and had a minimal risk of infection, would be detected.

Role of the Chinese medicine sector

29. Expressing concern that Chinese medicine practitioners had not been involved in the treatment of patients with COVID-19 in public hospitals, Mr CHAN Han-pan called on the Administration to tap on the capacity of the Chinese medicine sector in combating the disease. SFH advised that Novel Coronavirus Epidemic Related Projects was a priority area open for application under the Chinese Medicine Development Fund for the Chinese

medicine sector to undertake related training, research and promotion projects. The Administration would continue to maintain communication with the sector in this regard.

Supply of surgical masks and PPE

30. Referring to the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme launched under the Anti-epidemic Fund to facilitate local production of masks in order to stabilize supply and to build up stock, Ms Elizabeth QUAT was of the view that the Administration should also subsidize the production of polypropylene which was commonly used as filter layer of surgical masks but was currently in acute supply shortage due to the epidemic. Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce & Economic Development (Commerce & Industry)¹ ("PAS(C&I)1") advised that while the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme was opened for application starting from 2 March 2020, the Hong Kong Productivity Council had since late January 2020 provided technical support to parties intended to set up local mask production lines. Many of these parties already had an inventory of raw materials for mask production.

[At 12:00 pm, the Chairman informed members of her decision to extend the meeting for 15 minutes beyond its appointed end time to allow more time for discussion.]

Admin

31. Expressing concern about the earlier acute supply shortage and price-gouging of surgical masks in the local market and the spread of the disease worldwide which would aggravate the demand for surgical masks, Ms Starry LEE requested the Administration to advise in writing its concrete plan on how to secure an adequate amount of PPE for use by Hong Kong residents and frontline healthcare personnel throughout the epidemic period when the health concerns would likely persist for a while. Mr Wilson OR considered that the Administration should put in place a mechanism to reserve stocks of surgical masks. SFH assured members that a multi-pronged approach would continue to be adopted to increase the supply of surgical masks in the market.

Admin/
HA

32. Noting that the Government Logistics Department ("GLD") and HA had made direct procurement of surgical masks without going through their respective tendering processes so that orders could be placed quickly in the highly competitive global market, Dr Fernando CHEUNG sought written information on the dates(s) on which GLD and HA started to do so.

33. Referring to a global open tender by GLD in late January 2020 on the supply of 57 million surgical masks on a 12-month contract, Mr CHU

Hoi-dick queried about the progress in this regard. In his view, the number of surgical masks ordered by GLD and the relevant delivery schedule should be made public online to enhance transparency. Deputy Director of Government Logistics ("DD of GL") advised that the tender closing date was on 21 February 2020. The Administration had awarded the contract on 2 March 2020 after the completion of tender evaluation process. She added that in the light of the epidemic development, global mask supply was expected to remain tight. As such, it would not be desirable to disclose specific procurement information to avoid undermining the bargaining power of the Administration in the procurement of masks. While understanding the Administration's concern, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan opined that the number of procured masks that had already been delivered to Hong Kong could be disclosed.

34. Expressing grave concern about the supply shortage and high price of surgical masks, in particular that for infants and young children, in the market, Ms Elizabeth QUAT asked whether the Administration would provide surgical masks for school children when classes were resumed and for pregnant women and infants who needed to undergo antenatal check-ups and receive immunization respectively. Noting that the Administration planned to resume classes on 20 April 2020 the earliest subject to further assessment, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan was concerned about the Administration's respective stockpile of surgical masks for the younger and the older children, which was in serious shortage in the market. Ms Starry LEE called on the Administration to ensure that there was an adequate supply of children-sized surgical masks for class resumption. The Chairman asked whether schools had procured adequate number of surgical masks of suitable size for their students.

35. DD of GL advised that the Administration's stockpile included surgical masks in both regular and small sizes. Regarding individual schools' stockpile of surgical masks, Principal Education Officer (Special Duties), Education Bureau ("PEO(SD)") advised that to the understanding of the Education Bureau, schools in general would keep a stockpile of surgical masks for winter surge and many of them were sourcing additional surgical masks from different channels to prepare for class resumption. The Education Bureau would keep in view the supply of surgical masks in formulating the plan for class resumption. Mr Wilson OR called on the Administration to encourage home-based production of children-sized surgical masks. Ms Alice MAK, Mr HO Kai-ming and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan considered that the approved applicant under the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme should be required to produce certain quota of children-sized surgical masks. PAS(C&I)1 remarked that under the above Scheme, the Administration had committed to make a one-year procurement from each production line of up to two million surgical masks per month, and the

masks produced under the Scheme would primarily meet the demand from the public healthcare sector.

Admin

36. Mr IP Kin-yuen expressed concern about the quality of the surgical masks supplied by the Administration to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to distribute to Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE") candidates as there were media reports that some surgical masks received by the candidates were stained. PEO(SD) said that the surgical masks were supplied by GLD. The Education Bureau would liaise with GLD to look into the matter. Mr IP Kin-yuen requested the Administration to provide supplementary information in writing.

37. Referring to the Administration's undertaking to provide about one million surgical masks for the staff of subvented, contract, self-financing and private residential service units so as to assist them to continue to provide services, Mr SHIU Ka-chun relayed the concern of some frontline social workers that some of the masks provided were of sub-standard. Assistant Director (Elderly), Social Welfare Department ("AD(E) of SWD") and DD of GL advised that the masks distributed, which were supplied by GLD, were produced by the Correctional Services Department ("CSD").

38. Mr SHIU Ka-chun noted that the Chief Executive had announced in February 2020 that the Administration would set aside 700 000 masks produced by CSD for distribution to cleansing worker engaged by outsourced cleansing service contractors, with priority accorded to those workers who were responsible for cleaning public toilets, public markets, refuse collection points, streets and public housing estates. He was concerned about whether surgical masks would also be provided to supervisors of the cleansing workers, drivers of refuse collection vehicles, members of pest control teams under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") as well as frontline outsourced workers engaged by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. In addition, some outsourced cleansing workers had indicated that they were not allowed to use their own masks or masks from donation. SFH said that FEHD would look into the matter.

[At 12:14 pm, the Deputy Chairman took the chair in the absence of the Chairman.]

39. Mr CHU Hoi-dick expressed similar concerns that supervisors of the cleansing workers and drivers of refuse collection vehicles were currently not provided with surgical masks. It should also be noted that while one mask was provided to frontline cleansing workers per day, the masks might

get soiled due to their job nature. Mr Wilson OR appealed the Administration to provide and private entities to donate more masks for frontline cleansing, security and welfare personnel. In his view, cleansing workers would need more than one mask per day. SFH assured members that the Administration would keep in view the supply of masks produced by CSD to see whether more support could be provided to frontline workers. On mask donation, Deputy Director of Home Affairs (2) ("DD of HAD") elaborated on the community engagement efforts made by HAD as set out in paragraph 29 of the Administration's paper, which included distribution of about five million donated surgical masks to the needy.

40. Mr CHU Hoi-dick urged the Administration to launch a new tender exercise for provision of cleansing services for buildings with confirmed cases as existing cleansing workers engaged by the outsourced cleansing service contractors might not be prepared to perform such a high-risk job, in particular under the situation whereby appropriate PPE was not provided. SFH took note of the suggestion.

Risk communication

41. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok urged the Administration to make speedy public announcement on the dedicated website (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) of information relating to the epidemic, such as statistics on confirmed and discharged cases, passenger traffic and persons subject to home quarantine, compulsory quarantine requirements and outbound travel alert issued.

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG called on the Administration to utilize the network of non-governmental organizations providing services for ethnic minorities to promote anti-epidemic messages and distribute surgical masks to the ethnic minorities. DoH advised that updated epidemic-related health messages were provided at the dedicated website in various languages. As early as January 2020, the Administration had disseminated information relating to the outbreak of COVID-19 to foreign domestic helpers working in Hong Kong through the consulate-general concerned. The Administration would continue to step up its efforts in this regard. DD of HAD added that HAD had disseminated CHP's advice to different sectors, including ethnic minorities.

43. Noting that one pet dog of a confirmed case had been tested weak positive for the virus, Ms Alice MAK called on the Administration to step up public education to raise public awareness on the good hygiene practices that pet owners should adopt and the fact that there was no evidence that pet animals could be a source of COVID-19 for humans so as to curb animal abandonment. In addition, mammalian pet animals from households with persons confirmed as infected with COVID-19 or close contacts of

COVID-19 infected persons should be put under quarantine in facilities of the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department. SFH took note of the suggestion, adding that pet owners should adopt good hygiene practices (including hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing them) and maintain a clean and hygienic household environment. People who were sick should restrict contacting animals. If there were any changes in the health condition of the pets, advice from a veterinarian should be sought as soon as possible. Under no circumstances should pet owners abandon their pets.

44. Expressing concern that different entry requirements were announced by different Thailand authorities in the past few days, Mr YIU Si-wing queried about the actions taken by the Administration to help clarify the situation. DS for S advised that the Security Bureau had maintained communication with the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Bangkok, and through which with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Embassy of The People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Thailand. In Hong Kong, the Administration had also communicated with the Royal Thai Consulate General in Hong Kong to follow up the issue. The Administration would make timely announcement as soon as further information through official sources was available. On the number of affected Hong Kong travellers, PAS(C&I)1 advised that according to the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, as at 9 March 2020, about 10 tour groups with a total of 260-odd Hong Kong travellers were in Thailand and some 50 group tours to Thailand had been cancelled.

Relief measures for industries

45. Holding the view that the epidemic might not end in one to two months' time, Mr YIU Si-wing queried whether the Administration would provide funding for a second round of relief measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund to help those industries hard hit by the pandemic and various anti-epidemic measures introduced by the Administration to tide over this difficult time, in particular the travel and travel-related industries which were in an almost frozen state. SFH advised that apart from setting aside dedicated resources for the Anti-epidemic Fund, a package of counter-cyclical measures had also been announced by the Financial Secretary in the 2020-2021 Budget to support enterprises, safeguard jobs, stimulate the economy and relieve people's burden. The Administration would keep in view the development of the epidemic and make prompt response to preserve the vitality of the economy where necessary.

[At 12:35 pm, the Deputy Chairman suggested and members agreed that the meeting be further extended to end until all Members who were waiting to speak for the first time were given an opportunity to do so.]

Proposal from members to prescribe COVID-19 as an occupational disease

46. Mr CHU Hoi-dick was concerned about the progress of the Labour and Welfare Bureau in examining the proposal to prescribe COVID-19 as an occupational disease under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282). Noting that there was no representative from the Labour and Welfare Bureau attending the meeting, the Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written response after the meeting.

Admin

Hong Kong residents in Hubei Province

47. While expressing appreciation for the Administration's arrangement to bring 469 Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province back to Hong Kong by two chartered flights in early March 2020, Mr IP Kin-yuen called on the Administration to expeditiously arrange further batches of chartered flights to bring the remaining Hong Kong residents in various parts of Hubei Province, whom, to his understanding, including tens of kindergarten and primary students, back to Hong Kong. Ms Alice MAK asked about the plan of the Administration in this regard. Mr Wilson OR asked when the Hong Kong residents stranded in various parts of Hubei Province could return to Hong Kong.

48. Principal Assistant Secretary (Constitutional & Mainland Affairs)⁸ advised that the 469 Hong Kong residents taking the first two chartered flights to Hong Kong included 379 people stranded in Wuhan and another 90 people stranded in other parts of Hubei Province who had an urgent need to return to Hong Kong, such as HKDSE candidates and urgent cases in need for medical treatments in Hong Kong. The Administration would continue to maintain close liaison and discussion with the Hubei Provincial Government on the bringing back of Hong Kong residents in other parts of the Province according to the principle of giving priority to urgent cases and taking into account the capacity of the healthcare and quarantine facilities. In the meantime, it would continue to provide necessary support for those Hong Kong residents still stranded in Hubei Province. Ms Alice MAK took the opportunity to express appreciation to the efforts made by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Wuhan to address the imminent needs of the Hong Kong residents stranded in Wuhan city.

49. Mr Wilson OR enquired about how the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") could provide support to meet the psychological need of the Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province and their family members

in Hong Kong. AD(E) of SWD advised that persons in need could approach the Integrated Family Service Centres at district level and call the hotlines operated by SWD to seek necessary advice and assistance. DD of HAD added that for those serving on home quarantine, any cases requiring emotional support received by the hotlines manned by HAD and District Offices would be referred to SWD for follow up.

Outbreaks on cruise ships

50. Mr Vincent CHENG was concerned about whether the Administration had provided medical and other forms of support to those Hong Kong passengers of the Diamond Princess cruise ship who had infected COVID-19 and were hospitalized in Japan, in particular the more serious cases. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan raised a similar concern.

51. SFH and DS for S advised that three chartered flights had been arranged by the Administration to bring a total of 193 Hong Kong residents on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship back to Hong Kong. To assist those remaining in Japan, the Administration had deployed 23 ImmD officers and a medical team of DH comprising three consultants and senior doctors in Japan to provide suitable support to the patients and their families. The medical team had contacted the attending doctors and where appropriate, the patients of confirmed cases or their family members to learn more about their conditions for assessment. While the medical team had returned to Hong Kong by early March 2020, they had maintained communication with the patients concerned or their family members. At the time of the meeting, there were still 16 ImmD officers remained in Japan and together with the staff of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Tokyo, they would continue to provide on-site support to the patients and their family members as necessary. Mr Vincent CHENG thanked ImmD and DH on behalf of the patients and their families for the efforts made in this regard.

52. In response to Mr Vincent CHENG's concern about the support provided by the Administration to the families of the two deceased cases, DS for S advised that one of the cases was a holder of British passport and was assisted by the British Government according to the wish of the family. The Administration would assist the family of the other case as appropriate.

53. In response to Mr Vincent CHENG's enquiry as to whether there were any Hong Kong passengers on board the "Grand Princess" cruise ship which recorded an outbreak of COVID-19, SFH replied in the negative. DS for S added that while there had been no cases seeking assistance received so far, the Administration would maintain communication with the

relevant consulate general of the People's Republic of China and the cruise company to keep in view any further development.

II. Any other business

54. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:03 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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