

立法會

Legislative Council

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by the Administration)

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Panel on Health Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 24 April 2020, at 10:45 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 Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
 - Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP
 - Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, 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 Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
 - Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
 - Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
 - Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP

Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony Wai-chuen, BBS

**Member
absent** : Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP

Public Officers : Item III
attending

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

Mr Howard CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Health)¹
Food and Health Bureau

Dr Constance CHAN Hon-yea, 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 Bill WONG Kwok-piu
Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Commerce & Industry)⁵
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

Mr Kerr LI Ming-yat
Assistant Director-General of Trade and Industry (Mainland)
Trade and Industry Department

Mr Tony WONG Chi-kwong, JP
Deputy Government Chief Information Officer
Innovation and Technology Bureau

Ms Lisa LAI Yuk Wan
Assistant Director (Special Duties)
Home Affairs Department

Dr Verena LAU Wing-yin
Principal Education Officer (New Territories)
Education Bureau

Mr Wicky CHEUNG Wing-keung
Chief Leisure Manager (Management)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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

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I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)855/19-20(01) and (02)]

2. Members noted that the Administration had not proposed any items for discussion at the next regular meeting of the Panel scheduled for 8 May 2020 at 10:45 am.

3. Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Support for Cancer Patients decided at its meeting on 17 March 2020

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to refer the subject of breast cancer screening to the Panel for follow up with the Administration. She asked whether the Administration was in a position to revert to the Panel at its May regular meeting on the findings of the commissioned study conducted by The University of Hong Kong ("HKU") on the risk factors associated with breast cancer for local women and the way forward for the implementation of breast cancer screening. The Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH") responded that the Administration would work with HKU on the timing to brief the Panel on the subject.

4. Referring to the Administration's response to his letter dated 15 April 2020 (LC Paper No. CB(2)856/19-20(01)), Dr KWOK Ka-ki proposed that the Panel should discuss the adjustments made by the Hospital Authority ("HA") in relation to its non-emergency and non-essential medical services under the activation of Emergency Response Level in public hospitals.

5. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen suggested that the Panel should discuss the enforcement work of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and invite representatives from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Hong Kong Police Force to attend the meeting to answer members' questions.

6. Mrs Regina IP requested the Panel to discuss the follow-up actions taken by HA on the impact on public hospital services caused by the industrial action staged by some of its staff in early February 2020.

7. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan expressed concern about the recent identification of a local dengue fever case and the outbreak of dengue fever in Thailand whereby some patients suffered from both dengue fever and coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19"). She considered that the Panel should discuss the measures for the prevention and control of dengue fever as an outbreak of which would further strain the healthcare system.

8. Mr Michael TIEN was concerned about the hygiene of public toilets which was necessary for the control of the spread of communicable diseases. The Chairman invited SFH to take note of the concern which fell into the purview of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene.

9. The Chairman concluded that the Panel would continue to discuss the measures for the prevention and control of COVID-19 at the May regular meeting and the Clerk would follow up with the Administration regarding the issues to be covered under the discussion.

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(*Post meeting note:* Members were informed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)886/19-20 issued on 29 April 2020 that with the concurrence of the Administration and the Chairman, the discussion of the subject would cover members' concerns set out in paragraphs 4 to 6 above.)

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)820/19-20(01), CB(2)855/19-20(03) to (05), and CB(2)856/19-20(01)]

10. At the invitation of the Chairman, SFH briefed members on the latest situation and measures for the prevention and control of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)855/19-20(03)).

11. Members noted the following papers on the subject under discussion:

- (a) letter dated 15 April 2020 from Dr KWOK Ka-ki and the Administration's response to the letter (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)820/19-20(01) and CB(2)856/19-20(01));
- (b) letter dated 22 April 2020 from Dr Pierre CHAN (LC Paper No. CB(2)855/19-20(05)); and
- (c) updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)855/19-20(04)).

Immigration control measures and quarantine arrangements

12. Expressing grave concern that there might be an increase in the number of Mainland visitors to Hong Kong during the Labour Day Golden Week, Dr Fernando CHEUNG sought clarification as to whether the immigration control measure that all travellers from the Mainland, unless exempted, would be subject to a 14-day compulsory quarantine would remain in force during the Labour Day Golden Week. Worrying that any relaxation of the current measure would bring another wave of the epidemic, Mr Charles MOK raised a similar concern. Ms Alice MAK considered that there was no cause for the concern since the issuance of endorsement for the Individual Visit Scheme had been suspended by the Mainland authorities since early February 2020. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Dr KWOK Ka-ki called for a complete closure of boundary control

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points to stop the flow of visitors to Hong Kong, with the latter going further to suggest that all inbound travellers should undergo viral tests at both air and land boundary control points before entering Hong Kong. Noting that some members had used the term "Wuhan pneumonia" during the discussion at the meeting, the Chairman pointed out that the disease was officially named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization ("WHO"). Ms Elizabeth QUAT considered it inappropriate for these members to use names for the disease that could incite discrimination. Noting that Emirates in coordination with Dubai Health Authority had introduced on-site rapid COVID-19 tests for outbound passengers departing from Dubai, she urged the Administration to work with airline companies to implement similar arrangement for passengers of inbound flights to Hong Kong.

13. SFH advised that a risk-based approach was adopted in formulating the border control measures. For the time being, the compulsory quarantine requirements under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) would be effective till midnight of 7 May 2020. All inbound travellers arriving by air were subject to the collection of deep throat saliva samples at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre set up by the Department of Health ("DH") at AsiaWorld-Expo for conducting test for COVID-19. Only those who were tested negative could go to their place of accommodation to continue completion of the 14-day quarantine.

14. Ms Alice MAK sought information on countries or regions from which imported cases of COVID-19 were recorded, including whether there were any COVID-19 cases among those Hong Kong residents returned from Hubei Province by chartered flights arranged by the Administration. In her view, those countries or regions from which the majority of imported cases were recorded should be held accountable for the worsening local epidemic development in March 2020 and the adverse impact on the economy of Hong Kong. The Chairman drew members' attention to the supplementary information provided by the Administration the day before this meeting in this regard (LC Paper No. CB(2)859/19-20(01)) in response to members' enquiries raised at the meeting on 8 April 2020.

15. SFH advised that as of 23 April 2020, the top five countries or regions from which imported cases were recorded were the United Kingdom (401 cases), the United States (84 cases), France (46 cases), Switzerland (36 cases) and Canada (33 cases). As regards the returnees

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from Hubei Province by the Administration's first batch of four chartered flights who were tested to ascertain whether they were infected with COVID-19, one of them was tested positive. Separately, no case of COVID-19 was reported among the 80 000 to 90 000 persons subject to home quarantine under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation since its coming into operation on 8 February 2020.

16. Pointing out that the number of new cases had stayed at single-digit level for 12 consecutive days Mr YIU Si-wing sought information on the plan of the Administration to relax its border control measures with countries or regions with low public health risk including Macao. SFH advised that the Administration had been closely liaising with the relevant government departments of Guangdong and Macao under the framework of joint prevention and control.

17. The Chairman queried if it was compulsory for asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving by air under 14-day to have their deep throat saliva samples collected around the completion of the 14-day home quarantine period for another round of testing. Replying in the negative, Director of Health ("DoH") advised that DH would further assess the need to oblige all specimens to be collected based on the response rate to the above arrangement which had only been implemented starting from 20 April 2020 and the number of positive test results collected. The Chairman called on the Administration to mandate the collection.

Use of hotel as holding centre for test result

18. Mr Vincent CHENG expressed grave concern about the Administration's use of Regal Oriental Hotel in Kowloon City since 22 April 2020 as the Holding Centre for Test Result of DH for asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving on flights in the afternoon or at night, as this might pose health risks to the local community, in particular residents of Po Sing Court which was located adjacent to the Hotel and had two floors being used by Hotel staff for resting and dining. He considered that the Centre should be set up in hotels closer to the Hong Kong International Airport ("HKIA"), or at the very least, DH should arrange coaches for the departure of travellers whose test results were negative from the Hotel. Mr Charles MOK, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan raised similar concerns. Ms Starry LEE and Dr Helena WONG sought information on the criteria for choosing the Hotel as the Centre as well as measures to safeguard the health of Kowloon City residents and compensate for businesses affected.

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19. SFH assured members that the present arrangement would not introduce additional risks to the local community where the Hotel was situated, as all asymptomatic passengers staying at the Centre were restricted from leaving their hotel rooms or moving around in the Hotel under the quarantine order issued to them. As of 23 April 2020, the test results of all the 286 travellers who had been taken to the Hotel were negative. They were allowed to leave the Hotel and go home or to a designated place immediately to continue the 14-day compulsory quarantine. As regards the site selection, the Administration had approached different hotels, including those nearer to HKIA, to explore the setting up of the Centre but the search met with challenges. One of the factors for setting up the Centre in Regal Oriental Hotel was that the facility could be put into use within a very short period of time. While the risks of persons waiting for test results at the Centre were not higher than those under the 14-day compulsory quarantine who opted to stay at other hotels, the Administration would continue to enhance the communication with local residents to ease their concerns. DoH added that the ventilation system of the Hotel had been examined by experts from the Centre for Health Protection ("CHP") and the Electrical and Mechanical Service Department to confirm that no additional risks would be posed to the buildings or community nearby the Hotel. Infection control measures had been put in place and hotel staff were trained and equipped with appropriate protection outfits. It should also be noted that under the current operation, there was a very minimal chance that the hotel staff would have direct contact with the persons waiting for test results. In response to Mr Charles MOK's follow-up enquiry, Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Health)1 ("DS(H)1") advised that the Administration had no authority to require the use of a hotel for the purpose. Ms Starry LEE and Dr Helena WONG requested the Administration to advise in writing the criteria for choosing the Hotel as the Centre and measures to minimize the impact on residents of Po Sing Court respectively.

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20. The Chairman called on the Administration to introduce rapid tests for all inbound travellers at HKIA so that their waiting time for test results at the Centre could be significantly shortened. Director (Quality & Safety), HA ("D(Q&S), HA") advised that the new rapid tests with a turnaround time of around one hour recently introduced by HA had to be conducted in a laboratory setting. At present, the number of test kits available was around 2 000 per week and priority would be given to patients at Accident and Emergency Departments of public hospitals.

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Viral testing

21. Prof Joseph LEE suggested that the Administration should make reference to the practice in the Mainland and overseas countries such as Germany and the United States to introduce population-based serology antibody tests so that persons with antibodies to the virus causing COVID-19 would be issued immunity passports. SFH advised that the Health and Medical Research Fund would support, among others, research study on real-time population-based sero-epidemiological studies of COVID-19 in the community.

Infection control facilities

22. Expressing concern about the lead time required for the construction of additional infectious control facilities, if any, under the first and second 10-year Hospital Development Plans ("HDPs"), Mr Michael TIEN enquired how the Administration and HA would increase the supply of such facilities in the nearer term. SFH advised that she had requested HA to review whether there was room for enhancing such facilities in HDPs including providing additional isolation facilities.

23. Mr CHU Hoi-dick sought information on the existing number of persons put under compulsory quarantine in Chun Yeung Estate and the intake schedule of prospective tenants of the estate. SFH advised that despite a decreasing trend in the number of persons under quarantine in Chun Yeung Estate, it was necessary to remain the use of the Estate as a quarantine centre for the time being to cope with the quarantine need that might arise as the development of the epidemic remained volatile. The Administration would review the use of quarantine facilities from time to time.

Maintaining social distancing

24. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen expressed concern about the inconsistency of standards of law enforcement agencies in enforcing the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation. In his view, there might be an abuse of power to clamp people's freedom or a lack of understanding about the two Regulations as demonstrated by some cases reported in the media. He enquired the manpower of the Police in enforcing the two Regulations. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Mr KWONG Chun-yu expressed concern about the possible use of the prohibition on social gathering as a political suppression tool.

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25. SFH and DS(H)1 advised that the above two Regulations were aimed at ensuring social distancing to break the local chains of transmission in order to control the spread of COVID-19. The two Regulations were enforced by six and seven departments respectively in accordance with the nature of the premises concerned and enforcement guidelines were issued by the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB"). Mr CHAN Chi-chuen requested the Administration to provide supplementary information after the meeting to list out the respective departments responsible for enforcing the two Regulations. In response to Mr CHU Hoi-dick's enquiry, DS(H)1 advised that under the two Regulations, appointment of public officer as inspector or authorized officer was made by SFH or DoH. The enforcement departments must adhere to the enforcement guidelines and make regular reports to FHB on the enforcement situation. FHB would follow up issues arisen and review the enforcement guidelines when necessary.

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26. Pointing out that many members of the public were experiencing anti-epidemic fatigue and many industries were hard hit by the anti-epidemic measures, Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired the criteria under which the various social distancing measures implemented under the two Regulations could be lifted to enable the resumption of certain social and economic activities. Raising a similar question, Mr SHIU Ka-fai called on the Administration to issue infection control guidelines to the trade as early as possible to facilitate them to follow once they were allowed to resume business so as to restore consumer confidence. Mr Michael TIEN asked whether an interruption of the transmission chain, which was defined by some experts as zero local infection for 28 consecutive days, was a factor to be considered in lifting social distancing measures and resuming social and economic activities. Mr YIU Si-wing urged the Administration to clarify and make public under what circumstances would the Administration consider that the transmission chain was cut and economic activities could be resumed. The Chairman raised a similar question. Mr KWONG Chun-yu asked for the timetable for resuming the businesses of those scheduled premises which were ordered to be closed till 7 May 2020.

27. SFH advised that the Administration had taken a prudent approach in tightening and relaxing the restrictions imposed under the two Regulations by taking into account a basket of factors which included the number of days whereby zero local cases were recorded, the number of imported cases, the outbreak risks in different settings such as residential care homes for the elderly, the global development of the epidemic and the capacity of the local healthcare system. Reference would also be made to the advice given by the local Expert Advisory Panel as well as the factors flagged up by WHO for considering whether social and economic restrictions could be

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lifted. The Administration had been closely monitoring the epidemic situation and the various measures in place, as well as giving advice to different sectors on how to minimize the health risks in their operations.

Response measures of HA and the Administration

28. Ms Starry LEE and Mrs Regina IP expressed appreciation to the efforts made by frontline staff of HA and the Administration in the fight against the epidemic to prevent the spread of the disease. Prof Joseph LEE pointed out the lack of improvement in the situation in public hospitals albeit the decline in the number of daily local confirmed COVID-19 cases. According to a survey conducted by the Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff, most staff members of the acute as well as the extended care public hospitals were worried about the stockpile of personal protective equipment ("PPE") and the workplace setting which did not cater for the use of general wards as negative pressure wards, not to mention morale, stress and emotional problems. He urged the Administration to make an effort to relieve their mounting pressure. Pointing out that infected persons might not present any symptoms, Mr POON Siu-ping expressed concern about the lack of appropriate PPE provided to frontline personnel providing non-emergency ambulance transfer services and the absence of designated vehicles for transferring persons undergoing compulsory home quarantine to hospitals. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan queried the stockpile and the approach to expedite the procurement of N95 respirators in public hospitals.

29. D(Q&S), HA acknowledged a shortage of N95 respirators. In view of the global tight supply of PPE, there was a need for prudent use of PPE in accordance with HA's infection control recommendation. Full PPE would be provided for the transfer of suspected and confirmed cases. As regards the provision of routine patient care, adherence of standard precautions was suffice to prevent the infection transmission. HA would endeavour to expedite the procurement of PPE and enhance the communication with frontline staff to understand their needs. He further advised that the mental health of staff of HA would be taken care of by Oasis - Center for Personal Growth and Crisis Intervention in place in HA through the provision of professional counselling and related services.

30. Dr Pierre CHAN called on the Administration to ease the workload of staff of DH performing duties on COVID-19 by having a better division of labour, as the Head of Communicable Disease Branch of CHP was seen hosting the Administration's daily press briefings on updates of COVID-19 cases every day during the epidemic period without taking a day off. DoH advised that all DH staff members were tasked with different duties under the epidemic situation including infection investigation, port health

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management and viral testing. In reply to Dr Pierre CHAN's further enquiry, SFH undertook to give responses to issues raised in his letters issued to the Administration in late February and early March 2020 on issues relating to COVID-19 as soon as practicable.

Hong Kong residents stranded overseas

31. Appreciating the Administration's efforts to assist Hong Kong residents stranded in Peru and Morocco to return to Hong Kong, Mrs Regina IP sought information on the number of requests for assistance received from residents stranded overseas (such as in India) and the Administration and HA's corresponding plans in this regard. SFH advised that the Security Bureau was examining how to provide assistance to these residents taking into account factors including the number and location of the residents, the availability of land and air traffic as well as the special needs of the residents. DS(H)1 supplemented that the Immigrated Department had received 2 324 requests for assistance as of 12:00 noon on 16 April 2020, involving 67 countries or regions, with most residents stranded in India and Pakistan. The Administration had been liaising with these residents to render assistance.

Class resumption

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG called on the Administration to step up its efforts to ensure the supply of surgical masks for schoolchildren once classes resumed. Holding a similar view and voicing grave concern about the pressure of mothers in taking care of the learning of their children during class suspension, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan sought information on the timetable for class resumption. SFH advised that all attending students should wear a mask to school. The Education Bureau had maintained communication with schools on the supply of surgical masks for contingency use after class resumption.

[At 12:34 pm, the Chairman informed members of her decision to extend the meeting for 15 minutes beyond its appointed ending time to allow more time for discussion.]

Home care services

33. Mr SHIU Ka-chun expressed grave concern that while meal services were maintained under the subsidized home care services operated by non-governmental organizations during the epidemic period, the suspension of the personal care and home-making services such as bathing and household cleaning had put singleton and doubleton elderly persons to inconvenience.

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He asked under what circumstances would these services be resumed and called on the Administration to devise guidelines on the prevention of COVID-19 in the provision of home care services and enhance the provision of PPE as some meals delivery workers could only resort to expired or inappropriate outfits. Controller, Centre for Health Protection of DH advised that the Infection Control Branch under CHP had issued different guidelines on the prevention of COVID-19 for various settings and could provide, where necessary, advice on detailed infection control procedures to the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"). At the request of Mr SHIU Ka-chun, SFH undertook to convey his concerns to the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and SWD for a written response. The Chairman remarked that the Panel had invited via FHB representatives from LWB to attend this meeting but to no avail. Re-invitation would be made for future meetings of the Panel on measures for the prevention and control of COVID-19.

Dissemination of information

34. Dr Pierre CHAN commended on the Administration's practice of providing a daily update of local infection situation on CHP website, but suggested keeping an online archive of the daily situation for the whole epidemic period. SFH and DoH advised that the Administration had been maintaining transparency in disseminating information on COVID-19 and would consider the suggestion.

35. Ms Elizabeth QUAT urged the Administration to provide information on the quarantine arrangements of different provinces and cities in the Mainland on the Thematic Website of COVID-19 for easy reference of members of the public. SFH took note of the suggestion.

Role of the Chinese medicine sector

36. Ms Elizabeth QUAT called on the Administration to enhance the role of Chinese medicine practitioners in combating COVID-19 epidemic. SFH advised that the Administration had launched the Special Chinese Medicine Out-patient Programme in the Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centre to provide free Chinese Medicine outpatient rehabilitation service to discharged persons who had received COVID-19 treatment.

Anti-epidemic fund

37. Mr SHIU Ka-fai urged the Administration to kick-start the Subsidy Scheme for Beauty Parlours, Massage Establishments and Party Rooms

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under the second-round of Anti-epidemic Fund as soon as practicable and provide further relief to businesses which were directed to extend their service suspension. SFH responded that different government departments had been working on the implementation of various subsidy schemes under the Anti-epidemic Fund.

38. Mr CHU Hoi-dick called on the Administration to extend the coverage of the monthly allowance of \$1,000 under the Anti-epidemic Fund, which aimed at frontline cleansing workers employed by outsourced service contractors of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, to drivers and supervisors as requested by members at previous meetings. SFH advised that the Administration would keep reviewing the arrangement.

Personal and environmental hygiene

39. Mr Michael TIEN suggested that the Administration should set up a dedicated team to conduct regular checks on public toilets with a view to monitoring and improving the hygiene condition and facilities of the premises to guard against the spread of the disease.

IV. Any other business

40. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:58 pm.