

For discussion
on 29 January 2021

**Legislative Council Panel on Commerce and Industry
Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Stimulation
of Hong Kong's Economy**

**Reviewing Government's anti-epidemic measures to facilitate
the revival of the local economy, including application of technologies**

PURPOSE

This paper seeks to brief the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Stimulation of Hong Kong's Economy of the Legislative Council Panel on Commerce and Industry on the anti-epidemic measures taken by the Government to facilitate the revival of the local economy, including application of technologies.

BACKGROUND

2. The coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) has since early 2020 developed into a global epidemic. Hong Kong must stand in solidarity to fight against COVID-19 with all-rounded anti-epidemic efforts. In accordance with the principle of “preventing the importation of cases and the spreading of virus in the community”, we must incorporate disease prevention and control and infection management into the day-to-day operations of society. The Government has been actively taking all necessary measures to strengthen epidemic control through several major areas, including testing, contact tracing, quarantine, isolation, vaccination, compulsory mask-wearing and maintaining social distance, etc., to further enhance the precision of the control measures. We strive to achieve the target of “zero infection” with the support and co-operation of the general public.

3. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of developing and promoting technology applications. A number of measures involve the application of innovation and technology (“I&T”), and technology products and applications researched and developed locally have played a supporting role in the fight against the epidemic. On the other hand, the Government has taken a series of epidemic control measures to prepare for reopening in the tourism, convention and exhibition, and film industries, etc., in order to facilitate the revival of the local economy. We will provide below an

update on the Government's overall anti-epidemic measures and the relevant application of technologies as well as its efforts to facilitate the revival of the local economy.

TESTING

4. In terms of virus testing strategy, the Government continued and expanded compulsory testing on a mandatory basis, targeted testing on an obligatory basis and testing on a voluntary basis so as to achieve the objective of “early identification, early isolation and early treatment”, with a view to cutting the transmission chains as soon as possible. Since the commencement of the fourth wave of epidemic from mid-November 2020 to 19 January 2021, the Government has conducted more than 2.4 million tests, of which 4 150 samples tested preliminarily positive (0.17 per cent), successfully cutting transmission chains in the community.

Compulsory testing on a mandatory basis

5. Since the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) came into operation on 15 November 2020, the Government has exercised the power under the regulation multiple times to issue compulsory testing notices with a view to fully implementing the virus testing strategy of compulsory testing on a mandatory basis. In order to cut the transmission chains in the community as soon as possible, the Government has also actively expanded the coverage of compulsory testing on a mandatory basis, especially for residential buildings, to achieve community clearing.

Targeted testing on an obligatory basis

6. For targeted testing on an obligatory basis, the Government continues to arrange testing for targeted groups based on risk assessment. Testing is currently arranged on a continuous basis for targeted groups including school teachers, staff of restaurants and bars, designated frontline employees of Kwai Tsing Container Terminals, etc. The Government also provides one-off free COVID-19 testing service to foreign domestic helpers, construction site workers and all couriers (including takeaway food couriers) at community testing centres (“CTCs”). The Government will regularly review the coverage and frequency of the targeted group testing based on the latest epidemic risk assessment. The relevant testing arrangement will also help the relevant professions/organisations to continue operation under a safe environment.

Voluntary testing

7. Following the completion of the Universal Community Testing Programme in September 2020, the Government continues to provide convenient testing service to the public through various channels in order to facilitate testing on a voluntary basis. Free testing is provided to individuals with 188 distribution points (namely designated general outpatient clinics of the Hospital Authority (“HA”), 121 post offices, and vending machines at 20 MTR stations) and 83 collection points which offers convenience for individuals who perceive themselves as having a higher risk of exposure or experience mild discomfort to submit deep throat saliva specimen. The above three channels can distribute over 40 000 specimen collection packs per day. We have also set up a total of 19 CTCs, with a total daily capacity of more than 20 000 tests.

8. On 23 January, the Government exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a “restriction-testing declaration” (“declaration”), by which people (“persons subject to compulsory testing”) within the specified "restricted area" in Jordan (i.e. an area bounded by Woosung Street to its east, Nanking Street to its south, Battery Street to its west and Kansu Street to its north) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the arrangement by the Government. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government originally aimed at finishing this exercise within about 48 hours, in order to achieve the goal of zero cases in the district with concerted efforts. With the co-operation of the residents under restriction, working staff from relevant Government departments and the testing agencies, the exercise finished earlier at midnight of 25 January. During the effective period of the declaration, about 7 000 persons underwent testing. As at midnight of 25 January, 13 confirmed cases were found. Persons with confirmed cases and their relevant close contacts have been transferred to quarantine centres or hospitalised for treatment.

Technological support for testing in an effective and orderly manner

9. Based on the experience of the Universal Community Testing Programme, we have set up booking, registration and logistics systems to facilitate the virus testing at CTCs, mobile specimen collection stations or using self-collected specimen collection packs, and to inform individuals of the test results via SMS in a timely manner. The Logistics and Supply Chain MultiTech Research and Development (“R&D”) Centre has developed a stringent system, which integrates QR code/barcode identifiers, electronic seal, bluetooth and global positioning system into a control network for real-time tracking of all the

specimen boxes and delivery vehicles. In addition, the Government launched an Electronic Testing Record System on 31 December 2020 to facilitate the download of personal electronic test records through the website (www.evt.gov.hk).

10. The Government in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong (“HKU”), conducts a research study on testing the COVID-19 virus in sewage, and applies it in monitoring the virus transmission in local communities. The research started in October 2020 with 26 fixed monitoring points set up across the territory with regular samples taken and tested for the gene segments of COVID-19 virus. So far, over 700 samples have been collected for analysis. In response to the fourth wave of COVID-19 epidemic emerging in November 2020, the research team flexibly adjusted the monitoring plan and collected samples at some housing estates with infected clusters for analysis, with a view to providing supplementary information to complement clinical testing results and assisting relevant Government departments to assess the local epidemic situation. In December 2020, the team first obtained consecutive positive results of the presence of the virus in sewage samples taken from two buildings in Choi Wan (II) Estate, Wong Tai Sin, where there had not yet been any confirmed cases. The Government immediately ordered compulsory testing for all residents in the two buildings and had successfully located a total of 10 infected cases there. This is the world’s first successful case of tracking down COVID-19 infection cases through combined testing of sewage and compulsory testing on residents. Currently, the Government is actively enhancing the capacity of sewage testing and extending the application of this innovative technology to other districts with virus transmission in order to facilitate speedy reaction to break the transmission chains.

11. All in all, we will continue to expand and implement measures on compulsory testing on a mandatory basis, targeted testing on an obligatory basis and testing on a voluntary basis, as well as encouraging members of the public to undergo testing by providing convenient testing services.

CONTACT TRACING

12. Contact tracing is also fundamental to the efforts in preventing further spread of the virus. To further strengthen the work on contact tracing, the Government has set up an inter-departmental work group led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, to review and enhance this area of work and to deploy additional manpower for this purpose.

Technological support

13. The Government has developed an electronic portal specifically designed for case investigation and contact tracing. By linking up various relevant departments, agencies and existing information systems, the Centre for Health Protection (“CHP”) collects the information of confirmed patients and contacts, enhancing the flow and use of information. The CHP can speed up its work in tracing contacts, as well as conducting testing and arranging quarantine or medical surveillance for such contacts by the electronic platform that streamlines the procedures and provides more accurate information.

14. Also, the Government launched the “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile app on 16 November 2020 to provide members of the public with a convenient digital tool for developing a habit of recording the time of visits to different venues and taxi rides during the epidemic. The mobile app will notify a user if he or she is later identified to have visited the same venue that a confirmed patient had visited at about the same time or hired the same taxi that a confirmed patient has taken on the same day. In the unfortunate event of infection, the user’s visit records can assist the CHP in epidemiological investigations. Currently, the number of downloads of the “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile application exceeds 450 000, over 68 000 public and private venues have displayed the venue QR code for members of the public to scan and record their visits, of which about 14 000 are public venues and over 54 000 are private venues. Besides, the “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile app can also be used directly in about 18 000 taxis across the territory. We are also collaborating with various scientific research teams from different universities to use the Bluetooth Low Energy and artificial intelligence technology, to facilitate the automatic recording of check-in data when an individual enters and leaves venues or vehicles without the need to scan QR codes.

15. As regards to the dissemination of epidemic information to the public, with the collaborative effort of relevant Government departments and the local information technology industry, the “Interactive Map Dashboard on the Latest Situation of Coronavirus Disease in Hong Kong” (“the Dashboard”) was launched in February 2020. It keeps members of the public abreast of the latest situation of the epidemic and other related information. Since its launch, the Dashboard has been enhanced from time to time in order to provide more information, such as details of probable/confirmed cases, buildings in which such cases have resided/visited, flights/trains taken by confirmed cases, collection points for submission of specimen and statistics on testing, etc. As at the end of December 2020, the Dashboard has recorded over 44 million views.

QUARANTINE

16. Given the severity of the global epidemic situation, Hong Kong cannot afford to drop its guard on entry prevention and control measures. The Government will continue to deploy stringent border control measures with a view to safeguarding Hong Kong and curbing the transmission of the virus at source. Under the circuit breaker mechanism of passenger flights which has been implemented since July 2020 (and tightened in September and November 2020), flights of the airline concerned from the relevant original ports would be prohibited from landing in Hong Kong for 14 days.

17. Currently, all inbound travellers arriving at the airport are required to undergo nucleic acid tests. After having their samples collected, the travellers must wait to ensure that their results are tested negative before they may proceed to designated hotels for compulsory quarantine (i.e. the “test and hold” arrangement), with a view to lowering the risk of spreading the virus to the community. Since 24 December 2020, the Government has appointed a contractor to carry out COVID-19 tests on the samples collected from inbound travellers using the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (“RT-PCR”) technique. The time needed for RT-PCR tests is shorter, thereby shortening the waiting time for test results by the inbound travellers.

18. In view of expert advice that the incubation period of virus carried by very few infected persons may be longer than the quarantine period of 14 days, as a precautionary measure, the Government has amended the regulations to lengthen the compulsory quarantine period for persons arriving at Hong Kong from a certain place (to a maximum of 28 days), and the period for a certain foreign place where the persons who arrive at Hong Kong have stayed before the arrival, for determining the quarantine and boarding requirements under the relevant Regulations (to a maximum of 28 days).

19. Moreover, in order to reduce the spreading of virus to the community, the Department of Health (“DH”) has tightened the requirement to disallow visitors for any person under compulsory quarantine at hotels during the quarantine period starting from mid-November 2020. If a person under compulsory quarantine at hotel requires the company of a carer, prior permission from the DH should be obtained, and the carer also has to be quarantined in the same hotel room until the end of the quarantine period.

20. The Government has implemented new measures since midnight on 25 December 2020, mandating all returnees who have stayed in places outside China on the day of arrival at Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day to undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in designated quarantine hotels. They must also take designated transport arranged by the Government to go to

the hotels and cannot disembark on the way to further reduce the contact between returnees from overseas and the local community. Also, the expert advisors will assist in examining in detail the arrangements from the arrival of returnees at the airport to their compulsory quarantine in the designated hotels to further enhance the arrangement to prevent any loopholes.

21. To maintain the essential operation of the society and the economy of Hong Kong and to ensure an uninterrupted supply of all daily necessities to the public, the Chief Secretary for Administration has, in accordance with the relevant regulations, exempted certain categories of persons (for example, consular and diplomatic officers, crew members of aircraft and cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers, etc.) from compulsory quarantine requirement upon arrival in Hong Kong. The Government has been closely monitoring the epidemic situation around the world in order to review the isolation and testing arrangements for exempted persons. The Government further tightened the testing and isolation arrangement for exempted persons arriving Hong Kong from foreign places in November and December 2020. All exempted persons arriving Hong Kong from very high-risk places must be subject to “test-and-hold” arrangement. They must also undergo self-isolation if practicable, or adopt “closed-loop management” during activities in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, exempted persons (including air crew members) who have visited extremely high-risk places during the 21 days prior to arrival, must be subject to compulsory self-isolation for 21 days in designated hotels upon arriving Hong Kong. They must also be subject to “test-and-hold” arrangement and undergo COVID-19 tests on Day-12 and Day-19 or Day-20 upon their arrival. In the meantime, exempted persons arriving Hong Kong via land boundary control points must produce the negative report of COVID-19 nucleic acid test conducted by a medical institution mutually recognised by the Governments of Hong Kong and Guangdong or Hong Kong and Macao.

22. The Government also adheres to the policy of prompt responses. Considering to the emergence of more transmissible new virus variants in Brazil, Ireland, South Africa and the United Kingdom, the Government announced that any person who has stayed in the aforesaid countries for more than two hours on the day of boarding or during the 21 days before that day are not allowed to board for Hong Kong.

23. Having considered the epidemic-control situation in Guangdong Province and Macao, the Secretary for Food and Health (“SFH”) has specified Guangdong Province and Macao as Category 2 specified places in China with effect from 23 November 2020 and relevant conditions pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), thereby allowing Hong Kong residents who are located in Guangdong Province and Macao to be exempted from the 14-day compulsory

quarantine requirement when they return to Hong Kong upon fulfilment of the specified conditions under the Return2hk Scheme.

Technological support

24. Hong Kong residents under the Return2hk Scheme can transmit their valid negative nucleic acid test results to the electronic health declaration system of the DH through “Yuekang code” or “Macao health code” for making health declaration electronically, with a view to shortening the clearance process when they enter Hong Kong. As at 24 January 2021, more than 36 000 Hong Kong residents have returned to Hong Kong under the Scheme.

25. In addition, we have developed the “StayHomeSafe” system and electronic wristband in the early stage of the epidemic in order to support the mandatory home quarantine measure implemented in early February 2020. The system could effectively monitor if a large number of persons under quarantine are staying at designated premises while protecting their personal privacy. It makes use of a Bluetooth Low Energy electronic wristband and a monitoring solution developed by a local research and development centre, coupled with the “StayHomeSafe” mobile app developed by a local technology start-up that adopts geo-fencing technology, to detect electronic signals, including Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and mobile telecommunications signals, etc. around the dwelling places of persons under quarantine, and by means of artificial intelligence analyse changes in various signal strength to monitor whether persons under quarantine are staying at their designated premises. To date, about 430 000 persons under quarantine have used electronic wristbands.

ISOLATION

26. The compulsory quarantine arrangement for close contacts has proven to be an indispensable measure in our fight against the epidemic. At present, the four close-contact quarantine centres (viz. Penny’s Bay Quarantine Centre, Junior Police Call Permanent Activity Centre in Pat Heung, Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village, Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre) provide about 4 150 units in total. As we expect there will still be a large amount of close contacts who need to undergo the 14-day quarantine, the Government has activated four hotels for close-contact quarantine purpose, which provide about 1 700 units. With the above measures, the Government currently has approximately 6 000 units for close-contact quarantine purpose to cope with the demand arising from the epidemic.

27. To relieve the pressure on the demand of hospital isolation beds, the Government had assisted the HA to establish the Community Treatment Facility

at AsiaWorld-Expo (“AWE”), providing a total of 1 850 beds. Meanwhile, with the assistance from the Central Government, a two-storey temporary hospital had been constructed on a piece of land near AWE adopting the Modular Integrated Construction (“MiC”) method. The temporary hospital would provide negative pressure wards that could accommodate around 820 beds. The HA would strive to put the temporary hospital into service by February 2021 in order to enhance the capability in combating the epidemic.

Technological support

28. Since the onset of the outbreak, the Government has taken decisive measures to identify suitable sites for constructing quarantine camps within a short period of time using the innovative MiC technology to meet the demands arising from the epidemic. One of the important factors in enabling the fast construction of a large number of quarantine units is the use of the MiC technology. Taking phase 1 of the quarantine camps at Penny’s Bay as an example, while the site formation and infrastructure works were being carried out, we were designing the centre at the same time. Upon the completion of design, it was the factory’s turn to start with the production and assembly process of the components of individual units. Processes involving interior decoration, building services, furniture and electrical installations were all completed in the factory. Therefore, when the components arrived at the construction site, the accommodation facilities, doors and windows, air-conditioners, individual toilets and so on for individual units were already ready. For completion, workers only had to assemble all the units and connect them to services. Not only can this method greatly shorten site construction time, it can also enhance productivity, quality control and site safety.

VACCINATION

29. The Government’s goal is to provide vaccines for the majority of the Hong Kong population within 2021 through vaccination programmes led by the Government. Members of the public can receive vaccination on a voluntary basis free of charge. We will make reference to the views of the relevant Scientific Committees and the expert advisory group and arrange for priority groups to receive vaccination first, including groups which have higher risks of coming into contact with the COVID-19 virus (e.g. healthcare workers), groups which have greater mortality rates after contracting the disease (e.g. the elderly, chronic patients), and/or groups which may easily transmit the virus to the vulnerable or weak if infected (e.g. staff of residential care homes). Furthermore, we are reviewing other target groups which may need to receive vaccination early due to their work nature or other needs. As the vaccines will arrive Hong Kong in batches, the Government will arrange for members of the

public to receive vaccination as early as possible based on the priority and characteristics of the vaccines.

30. On the other hand, the Government has been supporting local R&D of vaccines to enhance our knowledge base and research capabilities in vaccinology and immunology. Since April 2020, the Health and Medical Research Fund (“HMRF”) has supported two local universities to conduct four vaccine-related R&D projects with a total commitment of \$29.5 million. Among them, the HMRF has funded around \$20 million to the Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine of the HKU, to conduct the Phase I clinical trials on the safety of an nasal spray COVID-19 vaccine candidate co-developed with partners in Mainland China (i.e. Xiamen University and Wantai Biopharmaceutical company) in February 2021. The study plans to recruit 100 healthy adult volunteers for the trials. This vaccine candidate is currently the only nasal spray vaccine among the COVID-19 vaccine candidates approved for clinical trials.

Technological support

31. We are collaborating with the HA to set up a booking and on-site registration system for the vaccination programme as well as a central vaccination record database. Members of the public can make online booking for the two doses of vaccines at different vaccination centers to enable a smooth vaccination process. After verifying their identity through the “iAM Smart”, the public can download both their COVID-19 electronic testing record and vaccination record at the same time. The Government is also working with the Airport Authority to study the digital health pass technology developed by international aviation organisations and other organisations and institutions, as well as the development of related international standards to foster mutual access to related digital health records and technology platforms to facilitate the public’s future outbound travel.

COMPULSORY MASK-WEARING

32. The Government implemented the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) on 23 July 2020. All persons must wear a mask at all times when they are boarding or onboard a public transport carrier, entering or present in an MTR paid area, or entering or present in a specified public place.

Technological support

33. Locally developed masks also played a role in the anti-epidemic efforts. Adopting its nanofiber technology, the Nano and Advanced Materials Institute has developed the world’s first nanofiber N99 facemask – NASK – in

collaboration with a manufacturer. NASK is manufactured in Hong Kong and compliant with the FFP2 standard of the European Union. It is a super breathable facemask with bacteria killing property and effective in removing most of the airborne contaminants. In the recent combat of COVID-19 pandemic, NASK has been adopted by the HA.

34. In order to help residents fight against the epidemic and provide a more environment-friendly alternative to disposable masks, the Government has distributed over 10 million CuMask+™ developed by the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel to Hong Kong residents for free. Two layers of the CuMask+™ contain small quantities of copper, capable of immobilising bacteria, common viruses and other harmful substances. The mask complies with the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) F2100 Level 1 standard, and is reusable for 60 times. In addition, we developed an online registration system which enabled a large number of members of public to register online within a short period of time. The system leveraged real-time queueing technology and regulated site traffic, thereby ensuring that the public could register in a successful, orderly manner. It received over 700 000 registrations in total on the first day, with the number of registrants reaching over two million and the average waiting time less than one minute.

SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

35. The implementation of stringent and decisive social distancing measures is the key to the Government's success in containing the third wave of the epidemic. In view of the signs of rebound in the number of local cases of unknown infection sources since mid-November 2020 and the risks brought about by mask-off gathering activities and staycation in hotels, the Government promptly introduced legislative amendments to the relevant regulations to regulate gathering activities in hotels and guesthouses as well as strengthen infection control measures therein. The Government also, having regard to the development of the epidemic situation, tightened the social distancing measures for several times in November. Subsequently, taking into account the latest development of the epidemic situation, the Government announced on 8 December the further tightening of social distancing measures. The relevant measures have been in effect since 10 December and are of similar extent or even more stringent than those implemented in response to the peak of the third wave of the epidemic during July and August last year, with a view to bringing the epidemic situation under control in a decisive manner by reducing social contacts and cutting the virus transmission chains as early as possible.

36. The Government announced on 19 January 2021 to maintain the relevant social distancing measures until 27 January 2021, including limiting the

period during which catering premises may provide dine-in services to end at 6:00 p.m. daily; limiting the number of people participating in banquets in catering premises to 20; closing all scheduled premises under Cap. 599F except club-houses and hotels or guesthouses; closing all facilities with the same function(s) as the aforesaid scheduled premises in club-houses and hotels or guesthouses that are open; and limiting the number of persons in meeting rooms or function rooms of club-houses and hotels or guesthouses to 50% of the normal capacity of that room, etc.

37. The special work arrangements for Government employees which have been implemented since 2 December 2020 would be extended until 27 January 2021. Save for those involved in the provision of emergency services and essential public services, all other government employees will be arranged to continue to work from home. During the implementation of the special work arrangements, members of the public are encouraged to use alternative means, such as the post, drop-in boxes or online channels to receive the services they need. The Government also appealed to employers to allow their staff members to work from home as far as possible according to their operational needs.

38. Since the situation of COVID-19 is still severe, further to the Government's earlier announcement on suspension of face-to-face classes and school activities of all schools in Hong Kong until 10 January 2021, the Education Bureau has decided that all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (including special schools and schools offering non-local curriculum) as well as schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as "tutorial schools") will continue the suspension of face-to-face classes and school activities after 10 January 2021. The suspension will continue until the beginning of this year's school Chinese New Year holidays. The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic's development, take into account professional advice from health experts and maintain dialogues with the school sector, in order to review the aforementioned arrangements and relevant measures in a timely manner.

Technological support

39. While many metropolises over the world are placed under lockdown, making use of e-commerce has become more important. This has also expedited digitalisation of the city. The Government launched the Distance Business ("D-Biz") Programme under the Anti-epidemic Fund ("AEF") to support enterprises to adopt IT solutions to continue their business and services during the epidemic. The D-Biz Programme was open for application from 18 May to 31 October 2020. It has received a total of 38 572 applications. About 95% of the enterprises benefited are small and medium enterprises. All enterprises are expected to be notified of their application results in the coming week. We hope that many

enterprises could seize the opportunity to expedite their digital transformation to face the challenges posed by the epidemic, and in the long run, enhance their competitiveness and explore new business opportunities.

40. Under the premise of reducing the chance of virus transmission and protecting the health of members of the public, the Government plans to make use of technology to control the intensity of people flow at Lunar New Year Flower Fairs this year to address demands of the trade and the public for sale and purchase of New Year flowers. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (“FEHD”) will install infrared detectors at the entrances of each venue to detect body temperature, and count the number of people at the entrances and exits and categorise people flow into three colours of red, yellow and green for real-time monitoring at various venues to avoid crowd gathering. Relevant data will also be displayed on the website in the form of map dashboard to show the flow of people at each venue for public reference. The FEHD will also post the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code outside the venue and encourage the public to scan and record their visit.

SUPPORTING LOCALLY RESEARCHED AND DEVELOPED ANTI-EPIDEMIC TECHNOLOGIES

41. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (“EMSD”) launched a thematic page on the E&M InnoPortal in February 2020, where nine I&T wishes for anti-epidemic application have been published successively, including self-disinfecting substances/coatings and using robotic technology for fever screening, indoor disinfection and delivery of objects to minimize close personal contacts, etc. The EMSD has received an overwhelming response of over 200 I&T solutions from I&T strategic partners in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area. The EMSD has been actively collaborating with several government departments to conduct field trials for more than 40 anti-epidemic I&T solutions. Advices would be given to the solution providers for refining their solutions, thereby helping the promotion of the solutions for further applications.

42. The Innovation and Technology Commission launched in March 2020 a special call under the Public Sector Trial Scheme to support product development and application of technologies for the prevention and control of the COVID-19 epidemic. The Scheme received 332 applications, of which 63 were approved, involving funding of over \$102 million. Approved projects include COVID-19 diagnostic/testing methods, reusable face masks/ face shields, anti-viral coatings, disinfection robots, COVID-19 spread prediction model, body temperature detection systems, etc., involving 57 public sector organisations. One of the successful examples is the touchless lift button technology, which helps avoid the risk of touching potentially contaminated surfaces in lift

installation. A trial scheme has been launched in different types of Government buildings and the Hong Kong International Airport with positive feedback from users. The Housing Authority is planning to introduce the touchless lift button technology in its shopping centres.

43. Last year, the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund set aside \$5 million for its food support flagship project, FOOD-CO, which distributes food or coupons to disadvantaged groups affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with the aid of information technology and data analysis. At the same time, the project received donations of over \$16 million from other commercial and charity organisations, benefitting over 22 000 people.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR REOPENING IN THE TOURISM, CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION, AND FILM INDUSTRIES

Tourism Industry

44. With the social events in the second half of 2019 and the persistence of the COVID-19 epidemic for more than a year, the tourism industry has come to a complete halt. Coupled with the financial support provided to the tourism industry earlier on in the first three rounds of the AEF, as well as the other helping measures including the Travel Agents Incentive Scheme and the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme rolled out earlier, the cumulative commitment of the Government support to the tourism industry amounts to some \$2.6 billion in total. At the same time, the Government guided by the principle of keeping health risks at bay, has been making every effort to explore and identify business opportunities for the tourism industry despite the challenging situation. Leveraging our much enhanced testing capacity and tracing ability, the Government is considering introducing more stringent testing and tracing requirements, which, together with self-discipline and cooperation of the tourism trade and the community, would enable the gradual resumption of tourism activities, reopening of theme parks, and eventual resumption of travelling between Hong Kong and the Mainland as well as overseas places.

45. As mentioned above, with the full support of the travel trade, the Government previously agreed to grant conditional exemption from the group gathering restrictions as stipulated in the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) to enable licensed travel agents to organise local group tours of not more than 30 persons. The trade has voluntarily come up with a set of stringent health protocol for travel agents and practitioners to follow in resuming local group tours so as to keep health risk under check. The relevant health protocol is at **Annex 1**.

46. Moreover, the two theme parks (i.e. Ocean Park and Hong Kong Disneyland) were very popular amongst local visitors during their last two rounds of reopening. The two theme parks have complied strictly with the relevant health requirements and guidelines, and implemented a series of anti-epidemic measures to ensure visitors' safety, including body temperature check, mask-wearing by visitors and staff, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, providing hand sanitisers, as well as ensuring social distancing at entertainment rides and restaurants, etc. The Government has been maintaining close liaison with the two theme parks, with a view to allowing gradual reopening and resumption of operation upon containment of the local epidemic. The two theme parks are also willing to follow the Government's new anti-epidemic measures in respect of testing and tracing when they reopen so as to further reduce the epidemic risks.

47. On cruise travel, the Government has suspended the immigration service at the two cruise terminals (i.e. Kai Tak Cruise Terminal ("KTCT") and Ocean Terminal) since February last year in view of the epidemic development. In this regard, the Government has been closely monitoring the situations and in close liaison with the trade, and introduced helping measures to support the trade at appropriate junctures, including offering reduction of fees and rents for cruise lines berthing at KTCT and tenants of KTCT, providing refund to cruise lines in respect of berth deposits for cancelled ship calls during suspension of immigration service, etc. Taking into account that domestic cruise travel has gradually resumed in nearby regions such as Taiwan, Singapore and Japan, the Government will continue to explore with the trade on the feasibility of resuming cruise travel when the epidemic situation subsides further, with implementation of effective anti-epidemic and social distancing measures.

48. The travel trade is facing a very difficult operating environment without cross-border/boundary travel. As such, the Government has been endeavouring to resume cross-border travel in a gradual and orderly manner while balancing the need to protect public health. We have since mid-2020 approached 11 countries that have a relatively stable epidemic situation and close economic and trade relations with Hong Kong to explore the establishment of travel bubbles. Among them, we have reached an agreement with Singapore on the ATB framework to allow visitors to travel to both places with no restrictions on itineraries or quarantine requirements subject to travellers' compliance with a set of health protocols, such as taking pre-departure and on-arrival COVID-19 tests, having no travel history in other places in the 14 days prior to departure, travelling on designated bubble flights, etc. We will continue to prepare for the resumption of Hong Kong's cross-border/boundary travel as soon as the local epidemic situation is under control.

49. As regards cross-boundary travel, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau has been liaising closely with Guangdong and Macao to explore the resumption of cross-boundary activities among residents of the three places in a gradual and orderly manner, through the mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results under the health codes, when the epidemic situations in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao are under control. Once normal cross-border/boundary travel can restart, the Hong Kong Tourism Board will roll out various Mainland and overseas promotion and offers to attract visitors to Hong Kong.

Convention and Exhibition Industry

50. The convention and exhibition (“C&E”) industry has been facing severe challenges amid the epidemic. Worldwide travel restrictions make it difficult for trade events to proceed, while local public exhibitions are subject to prevailing restrictions imposed on place of public entertainment by the directions issued by the SFH under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F).

51. The Government has been closely liaising with the trade with a view to facilitating gradual resumption of C&E events in an orderly and regulated manner. In addition to the aforementioned directions, the trade has been voluntarily taking additional health precautionary measures. The operator of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”) has promulgated a set of guidelines for all C&E events, covering measures that should be taken at different stages of C&E events¹ (at Annex 2). The operator has been closely monitoring compliance, and the parties involved are cooperative. To facilitate contact tracing, HKCEC and AWE have displayed prominently “LeaveHomeSafe” QR code.

52. The Government will continue to discuss with the trade additional health precautionary measures, having regard to the measures taken and experience of other premises, to provide extra assurance to the public and the trade when C&E events gradually resume. The Government will also continue our efforts on resuming cross-border and cross-boundary travel, such that visitors may come to Hong Kong for C&E events at appropriate time. When C&E events resume, the Government will continue to provide financial support under the \$1.02 billion Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme (“the Subsidy Scheme”) under the AEF².

¹ AWE is currently used as quarantine and community treatment facilities and is not available for C&E events.

² The Subsidy Scheme has two parts. One part of it, which was launched on 3 October 2020, subsidises organisers of exhibitions and international conventions held at the HKCEC and AWE 100% of the venue rental. The other part of the Subsidy Scheme subsidises exhibitors of exhibitions and participants of major conferences organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council 50% of the participation fee, and this part was launched on 30 November 2020. The Subsidy Scheme is valid until 31 December 2021.

Film Industry and Cinemas

53. The film industry is experiencing a very challenging time under the COVID-19 epidemic. We therefore announced in mid-July 2020 that around \$260 million under the Film Development Fund (“FDF”) would be earmarked to implement five major measures to increase the number of local film productions, nurture young directors and scriptwriting talents as well as enhance professional training, so as to help add value to the trade in a holistic manner. After the launch of the said measures, we have received positive response from the film sector, which considers that the support measures are practical and sustainable, and help increase the number of high-quality local film productions and nurture more film specialists, thereby benefitting both the sector and practitioners of different film professions. Meanwhile, we will continue to support projects that are conducive to the long-term development of Hong Kong’s film industry through the FDF.

54. The global film production chain has also evolved in light of epidemic. Coupled with the social distancing measures under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), cinemas were required to be closed thrice over the past year, dampening the business conditions of the cinema sector further. We have already launched three rounds of Cinemas Subsidy Scheme under the AEF to provide one-off subsidies to cinemas licensed as a place of public entertainment with commercial operation in specified periods in order to sustain their businesses. At the same time, the Government has all along been in close liaison with the trade, hoping to reopen the cinemas in a safe and orderly manner when situation permits. The sector has also exercised self-discipline during the period when operation was allowed, by implementing a series of preventive measures, and posting “LeaveHomeSafe” venue QR codes in all cinemas to assist contact tracing. The Government will continue to monitor the development of the epidemic situation and work closely with the trade, with a view to allowing the public to enjoy movies at ease under the big theatre screen when cinemas resume operation.

Enhanced Support for Small and Medium Enterprises (“SMEs”) on Market Promotion

55. Aside from helping the tourism, C&E, and film industries reopen as soon as practicable through stepping up various health precautionary measures, the Government has, at the same time, enhanced support for SMEs, particularly on the market promotion front. In the past year, most of the exhibitions held in overseas markets were forced to suspend or cancel due to the epidemic; some enterprises have to turn to promoting their products or services via online channels. To support enterprises to make better use of technologies and online

platforms to promote their brands and products, we have since April 2020 expanded the coverage of the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales and the SME Export Marketing Fund (“EMF”) to provide funding support for participation in virtual exhibitions organised by Government-related organisations or reputable exhibition organisers with good track records.

56. Also, keenly aware that the room for conducting promotion in overseas markets has been considerably restricted by the epidemic, the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address 2020, for a period of two years, to further relax the scope of the EMF to fund large-scale exhibitions held by organisations with good track records targeting the “local market”, as well as virtual exhibitions organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (“HKTDC”) and reputable exhibition organisers with good track records. In tandem, the eligibility criteria will be relaxed to cover non-SMEs³. We plan to seek approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council shortly for implementing the relaxation.

57. In addition, we will also simplify the application procedures for seeking funding support. The Trade and Industry Department has made special arrangements with the HKTDC, so that SMEs can apply for funding support from the EMF and the Subsidy Scheme through a one-stop electronic application platform. We will continue to explore other administrative arrangements to facilitate SMEs’ participation in major expos and market promotion activities.

58. In summary, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau is discussing with the above trades with a view to encouraging operators to put in place more stringent health precautionary measures to prepare for the reopening of businesses. These measures include requiring all staff or practitioners to regularly take COVID-19 tests; requiring venue management to ensure all visitors/customers use the “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile app to scan the specific QR code displayed at the venues to help trace confirmed cases and their contacts; using technologies as far as possible to implement crowd control to reduce the infection risk caused by mass gathering; incentivising the admittance of visitors/customers who have undergone COVID-19 tests, e.g. through giving out coupons or according priority access, etc., to those possessing a negative test result.

59. The Government’s efforts in facilitating the revival of the local economy include the work of other policy bureaux. We will further discuss the relevant measures with Members in future meetings in accordance with the agendas.

³ All non-listed enterprises registered in Hong Kong under the Business Registration Ordinance (Chapter 310) with substantive business operations in Hong Kong would be eligible to apply for the EMF.

ADVICE SOUGHT

60. Members are invited to note the information in this paper.

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

Food and Health Bureau

Innovation and Technology Bureau

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Development Bureau

Environment Bureau

January 2021

Anti-epidemic Undertakings for Local Group Tours

Arrangements for local group tour participants

1. Travel agents must take out local travel insurance for all the local group tour participants that includes coverage against COVID-19;
2. Travel agents must retain the names and contact information of all the local group tour participants to facilitate contact tracing by the authorities if needed;
3. Travel agents must provide all the local group tour participants with labels (e.g. stickers with the name of the travel agent) so that they can be identified as the local group tour participants of the tours organised by the travel agents. Travel agents must also request local group tour participants to wear the tour labels at all times during the local group tours;
4. Travel agents must implement temperature screening for local group tour participants before tour departure and could refuse those who feel unwell (e.g. with a fever, acute respiratory symptoms and loss of taste or smell) to join the local group tours. Tourist guides will provide all the briefings on the means of transport (e.g. tour coaches or ferries) when visiting outdoor attractions;
5. Travel agents should advise people with higher risk of contracting COVID-19 (e.g. those with pre-existing medical conditions) and individuals in close contact with the higher-risk group (e.g. living in the same household, long-term care facility employees) not to join the local group tours;

Itinerary arrangements

6. The number of people in a local group tour must not exceed 30 (including all working staff); and
7. The number of passengers on the means of transportation of the local group

tours (including all working staff) must not exceed:

(a) tour coach: 30 people or 50% of the seating capacity (whichever is less);

(b) ferry: 90 people or 50% of the seating capacity (whichever is less).

8. Travel agents should request local group tour participants to wear a surgical mask at all times during the local group tours except when having meals, minimise the meal time as far as practicable and not to drink or eat on the means of transport (except drinking water and taking medicine);
9. Travel agents should opt for electronic receipts and admission tickets as far as practicable in order to reduce the risk of cross infection;
10. Travel agents must not coerce the local group tour participants into shopping if the itineraries of the local group tours include any shopping arrangements;

Transportation

11. Travel agents must request the service providers to undertake that before receiving the local group tour participants, the means of transport provided by them (e.g. tour coaches or ferries) must be sanitised and disinfected (e.g. by using 1 in 99 diluted household bleach or disinfectants of equivalent or higher standard);
12. Travel agents must ensure that disinfectants and anti-epidemic supplies such as 60%-80% alcohol-based hand sanitisers, wet wipes, spare masks, thermometers, etc. are made available on the means of transport (e.g. tour coaches or ferries) and during the local group tours;

Restaurants

13. Travel agents must request restaurants to arrange seats, in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), for the local group tour participants and provide serving chopsticks and spoons for their use;

Attractions

14. Travel agents must facilitate and comply with the anti-epidemic measures and restrictions on the maximum number of people imposed by the attractions (e.g. theme parks or green tourist spots);
15. Travel agents must remind the local group tour participants to maintain good personal hygiene and appropriate social distancing, keep places clean and take away their own litter after visit (especially in green spots such as country parks, marine parks and special areas);
16. If there are indoor activities, travel agents must request the venue operators to adopt crowd management measures. Travel agents must as far as practicable assist in the regulation of the flow and density of the local group tour participants when they enter and depart from the venues and participate in the activities in order to avoid overcrowding;
17. Travel agents must request the venue operators to maintain proper ventilation of the venue, maximise fresh air intake of air conditioners, ensure regular cleaning of the filters and ducting, and if fans are used, to avoid blowing directly from one person (or group of people) to another;

Accompanying travel agent working staff

18. Travel agents must assign tourist guides or tour escorts with valid Tourist Guide Pass or Tour Escort Pass issued by the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong to receive the local group tours and must ensure that such tourist guides and tour escorts, before they first receive any local group tour under this exemption arrangement, have received COVID-19 testing and the test result must be negative;
19. Travel agents must provide frontline working staff (e.g. tourist guides, tour escorts, drivers, etc.) with appropriate anti-epidemic training or information (such as how to handle local group tour participants with respiratory symptoms, disinfecting all equipment such as microphones and earphones after use), instruct them to measure and record their temperature before

work and instruct that those who feel unwell (e.g. having a fever, acute respiratory symptoms and loss of taste or smell) must stop going to work and not receive any local group tour participants;

20. Travel agents must instruct frontline working staff (e.g. tourist guides, tour escorts, drivers, etc.) to wear surgical masks at all times during work except when having meals and not to drink or eat on the means of transport (except drinking water and taking medicine). Travel agents should also provide working staff with appropriate protective gears;
21. Travel agents must retain the names and contact information of all frontline working staff (e.g. tourist guides, tour escorts, drivers, etc.) to facilitate contact tracing by the authorities if needed;
22. When arranging the local group tours, travel agents should, apart from the above guidelines, make reference to other health guidelines as set out in the “Guidelines on Prevention of COVID-19 for Event Organiser of Mass Assembly” issued by the Department of Health (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/novel_infectious_agent_event_organiser_of_mass_assembly_en.pdf).



Advice on Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for Organisers to Hold Events at the HKCEC

This document is prepared based on the Guidelines for Event Organiser of Mass Assembly produced by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government Department of Health's Centre for Health Protection (CHP). Organisers of any event to be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) are advised to take public health risks into account, and take the following precautionary measures to minimise the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19.

Planning Before Event

1. A comprehensive risk assessment should be undertaken at the beginning of the planning phase and reviewed regularly during planning. It is preferable for event organisers to establish direct contact with CHP throughout the planning period to share information, review risk assessments, and develop plans. Event organisers are advised to include CHP Hotline numbers: +852 2125 1111 / +852 2125 1122 (8 am to 12 midnight) in the emergency contact list. Input from World Health Organisation (WHO) should also be considered.
2. A specific action plan to mitigate all risks identified in the assessment should be prepared. Action plan should specify who is responsible for delivering each action item, the timescale for delivery, how and by whom delivery will be ensured and clearly spell out the decision trigger points etc.
3. A Contingency plan to cancel / postpone / reschedule / scale down the event should be prepared in response to HKSAR precautionary measures, e.g. regulations on inbound travel.
4. A first aid provider should be appointed to give advice and handle suspected cases / sick participants on-site for exhibitions held in exhibition halls.
5. Sufficient supplies and materials, including tissue paper and hand sanitizer for all participants need to be pre-ordered. Have surgical masks available for those participants who do not have one on-site.



6. Contact details of all staff, exhibitors, contractors, visitors (if possible) and other participants are to be collected: mobile telephone number, email and address where they are staying. State clearly that the information will be shared with local public health authorities upon their request if any participant becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. Anyone who does not agree to this will be denied admission to the event.
7. Key message to related stakeholders including exhibitors, visitors, contractors, speakers, staff, etc should be shared well in advance and include the following :
 - The latest regulations imposed by the HKSAR Government on inbound travel should be communicated to all participants from outside of Hong Kong, including quarantine requirements (if any).
 - Access control and temperature screening will be implemented at the HKCEC. All persons with high temperature and/or displace respiratory symptoms will be denied entry. Organisers can set up temperature check points at event venue entrances, at their own cost and arrangement, in necessary. Any person wearing quarantine wristband will be denied entry. Everyone is required to wear face masks, or else will be denied entry. Organiser may consider providing extra face masks onsite for their participants.
 - Advise all to monitor their own temperature and other symptoms. If in doubt, they should not come to the HKCEC and should seek medical help as soon as possible.

During Events

1. Design the physical layout and logistics of the event with social distancing consideration e.g. wider aisles, limit number of attendees at any one time, visitor arrival and departure routings, increase shuttle bus frequency to avoid queues, avoid buffet, arrange seats at least 1 to 1.5 meters apart, etc.
2. Post up access control regulations regarding high temperature and face masks at all entry points, including loading entrances for contractors and forwarders. Organiser staff should be present at each of the access control points (or be reachable) to assist those who are turned away. Referrals to the nearest public hospital (Ruttonjee) or private clinics may be needed. If the concerned person is an exhibitor, arrangements to secure his / her stand will be needed.



3. Post up health education materials on personal hygiene such as hand washing / sanitising, cough etiquette, use and disposal of face masks in conspicuous sites to alert the participants.
4. Set up an Isolation Room for participants who present symptoms and need to wait for medical help. The Isolation Room should be easily accessible, well ventilated, enclosed and equipped with thermometers, hand sanitiser, masks, gloves, lidded rubbish bin, etc.
5. Prepare standard procedures for handling suspected case, in consultation with CHP. Organiser staff, first aid personnel appointed by organiser, and HML security personnel need to be well briefed and if possible, conduct rehearsals. All who are required to handle suspected cases should be equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that includes face masks, gloves and goggles. A suggested procedure is provided here.

Suggested Procedure on Handling Sick Participant(s) with Symptom of Covid-19

Before seeking medical care

- HML Security staff on duty cordon off the area and inform organiser immediately.
- Appointed first aid personnel with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE, suggest at least face mask, glove, goggles) to provide a face mask to sick person (if he is not already wearing one or it is contaminated), escort him to the nearest designated isolation room.
- Measure and record the temperature of the sick participant(s) and keep the temperature record.
- Advise and assist sick participant(s) to seek medical advice. Call 999 and inform the emergency personnel about the condition of sick participant(s) and their travel history (if known).
- Ask the sick person(s) locations in the HKCEC he/she has visited.

After care

- After taking care of the sick participants and / or accompanied person, HML staff, organiser staff and first aid personnel concerned should remove PPE carefully and discard them in a lidded rubbish bin, and then perform hand hygiene.



- HML Housekeeping staff should wear appropriate PPE (suggest at least face mask, glove, goggles). Upon completion of the cleansing, staff should remove the PPE carefully and discard them in a lidded rubbish bin, and then perform hand hygiene.
- If places are contaminated by respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, use strong absorbent disposable towels to clean up the visible matter. Then disinfect the surface and the neighbouring area with appropriate disinfectant. For non-metallic surface, disinfect with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach, leave for 15 - 30 minutes, and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.
- Event organiser and HML should compile a list of participants (a must for trade shows, if feasible for public shows) and staff duty list, which include their personal particulars and contact information to facilitate contact tracing when necessary.

If COVID-19 is confirmed

- Upon notification by CHP, organiser and HML convene to decide if necessary and when to close the event (entire or partial) and conduct disinfection of affected locations.
- Communication messages will be agreed by organiser and HML to address stakeholder and media enquiries.

Reference Links:

- i. Guidelines on Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for Event Organiser of Mass Assembly
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/novel_infectious_agent_event_organiser_of_mass_assembly_en.pdf
- ii. Key-planning for mass-gathering
<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/key-planning-recommendations-for-mass-gatherings-in-the-context-of-the-current-covid-19-outbreak>
- iii. Get your workplace ready for Covid-19
<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>



香港會議展覽中心
Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

- iv. Latest information on Inbound Travel
<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html>
- v. Relevant health education materials and poster
<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/464/102466.html>
- vi. Disease information
<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/102466.html>
- vii. AIPC & UFI Good Practice Guidance
https://www.ufi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AIPC_UFIr_Good_Practices_Guide_CV19.pdf

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