

Together, We Fight the Virus



The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr John Lee (centre), welcomed the arrival of the Mainland expert delegation at the beginning of the briefing. Next to him were the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan (second left), and the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit (second right).

Further to a video conference exchange between the experts of the two sides in early November 2021, a Mainland epidemic prevention and control expert delegation came to Hong Kong for a four-day inspection visit on November 20, 2021 to learn about the local anti-epidemic efforts and measures in Hong Kong.

The visiting Mainland expert delegation was organised by the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council (HKMAO) and the National Health Commission (NHC). Members included epidemic prevention and control experts from the NHC, the Guangdong Province, Shenzhen and Zhuhai. The HKMAO and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR were also represented.

During their stay in Hong Kong, the expert delegation conducted visits to local institutions and facilities related to anti-epidemic work, which included ports, healthcare facilities, quarantine centre, contact tracing office, etc, and met with relevant personnel to exchange views and share experiences. They started off with the Hong Kong International Airport to learn about the measures implemented at the airport to guard against the importation of cases and to lower the risk of the virus importing into Hong Kong and the Mainland. The delegation visited the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre to learn about the Hospital Authority's treatment arrangements for confirmed COVID-19 patients. They were also briefed on the quarantine, immigration and customs clearance for passengers and goods vehicles at Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port and gained more understanding on the latest operations of Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre on Lantau Island.

The delegation was also arranged to see the mode of operation and workflow at a designated quarantine hotel in Wan Chai and a community testing centre in Yau Ma Tei. They also visited a private laboratory in Tai Po to learn about its operations, and were briefed on the latest COVID-19 testing capacity in Hong Kong.



The delegation visits Tin Shui Wai Hospital to understand the triage and consultation arrangements in the Accident and Emergency Department.



Accompanied by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan (front row, second right), the expert delegation visited the Hong Kong International Airport to learn about the measures implemented at the airport to guard against the importation of cases

TOGETHER, WE FIGHT THE VIRUS



The Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit (centre), together with the Government Chief Information Officer, Mr Victor Lam (left), and the Deputy Government Chief Information Officer, Mr Tony Wong (right), pictured at a press conference to announce details of the Hong Kong Health Code on December 2, 2021.

During the four-day visit, representatives of the big data office under the NHC, the Innovation and Technology Bureau, and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer also had in-depth exchanges and discussions on the design, operation and information security protection of the Hong Kong Health Code system, as well as the preparation work of the interface between the Hong Kong Health Code and the “Yuekang Code”.

The Hong Kong Health Code, which facilitates quarantine-free travel between Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong, was open for registration on December 10, 2021. It ensures that the users are not high-risk individuals during boundary crossings and will not impose additional risk to the anti-epidemic work in the Mainland.

After the resumption of quarantine-free cross-boundary travel, only persons with a Green Hong Kong Health Code valid for the day and while fulfilling other specific criteria can apply for code conversion to the “Yuekang Code” or the “Macao Health Code”. The Hong Kong Health Code has joined the health code systems and the mutual data recognition mechanism of the Guangdong Province and Macao, and the way to determine the colour of the code is also aligned. Members of the public can register an account and familiarise themselves with its functions, with a view to facilitating a smoother operation when quarantine-free travel with the Mainland and Macao officially resumes.

On the other hand, the mandatory requirement to use the “LeaveHomeSafe” (LHS) mobile application has been extended to all premises regulated under the Prevention

and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) from December 9, 2021. The enhanced measure was part of the Government’s strategy to step up the epidemic control capacity with a view to attaining the goal of dynamic “zero infection”. Under the latest arrangements, all catering business premises that offer dine-in services, bars or pubs, bathhouses, party rooms, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises, cruise ships, amusement game centres, fitness centres, places of amusement, places of public entertainment, beauty parlours and massage establishments, clubhouses, sports premises, swimming pools, hotel and guesthouses, event premises, as well as scheduled premises managed by the Government will implement the requirement on the use of the LHS mobile application.

On the vaccination front, as the virus variants have undermined the protection of vaccines, the Government announced that in order to build a protective barrier in the community, the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme would be expanded from January 1, 2022 to provide a third dose vaccination service to all people who had received the second dose six months ago, and a second dose vaccination service to persons aged 12 to 17.

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant has caused the global COVID-19 epidemic situation to become severe again. To prevent importation of infection cases, non-Hong Kong residents and non-fully vaccinated Hong Kong residents are restricted from entering Hong Kong, while stringent quarantine and testing arrangements have been put in place for inbound arrivals.