

## Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting with the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan today (March 17):

Reporter: First question: several countries have taken the path of banning entry for everyone except residents, so why has the Government not taken this move but instead chose the path of travel alerts or stepping up the quarantine requirements? Second question: everyone entering Hong Kong from first day will be quarantined for 14 days. Do we have enough quarantine centre spaces looking forward and while most of the people will be doing a home quarantine, does the Government have enough manpower and resources to conduct checks and offer support etc, as you mentioned, because it's a huge team of people supporting this whole quarantine arrangement? Third question: CE, you have mentioned that it is impossible to end the class suspension on April 20. Do you have the estimate of when class can really resume and will it be possible that class can't really restart till the end of this school term – that is July? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you very much for those three questions. First is about banning entry except Hong Kong residents. This is a very drastic step which we did implement very early in the day on January 27 as far as residents coming from Hubei and Wuhan. As I said throughout the process of this anti-epidemic work, we have to base our decisions on science, on the actual situation on the ground and other implications. And the important point is, if I can share this statistic with you, all the confirmed cases, especially those so-called imported cases or those who have travel history during the incubation period, or the close contacts, up to now they are all Hong Kong residents. With that factual situation, I think it is a bit too drastic to go into that sort of total banning because we have to understand that there are always some very genuine and compassionate cases on an exceptional basis that despite a 14-day quarantine they need to come to Hong Kong. Hong Kong as I said, while we are still in the epidemic situation, we have to allow the city to continue, the business to resume, otherwise we may have more problems on the economic front.

The second point is a very valid one which I have explained at some length. We will be seeing more people who require compulsory quarantine or medical surveillance. I have said that we have very limited quarantine centre, basically now is about maybe 1,600 places, including three blocks in Chun Yeung Estate. With this very limited quarantine centre facilities, we have taken the view that they should be reserved for the really high risk cases. Who are the high risk cases? One is the close contacts of confirmed cases. And you don't know, I don't have a crystal ball, sometimes one confirmed case could give rise to a hundred of close contact cases, so we have to reserve that capacity for the high risk cases. Secondly, from time to

time we have unforeseen incidents like Heng Tai House of Fu Heng Estate in Tai Po. It's an unforeseeable incident that suddenly we need to evacuate and put them into quarantine centre because they are also high risk cases. From now on, I would say the majority of arrivals in Hong Kong will be put under home quarantine or medical surveillance of some form.

Your question then is how can we assure that there will be good compliance for the home quarantine cases. We will do our best in terms of the monitoring, the surveillance, the telephone calls, the WhatsApp location services and spot checks. But at the end of the day because of the large numbers involved -right now we already have over 20,000 active home quarantine cases, we are expecting more- so I am appealing to individuals who are being put under home quarantine to have self-discipline, to observe the rules and the requirements and to protect themselves and their family members and ultimately of course protect Hong Kong from a major outbreak. Since we have been doing quite well in the last two months, we really should preserve these results that we have made through joint efforts. But we will increase our staffing at various levels. I have asked for more civil servants to be enlisted to join this anti-epidemic work, both at the airport and in the various back offices to support the home quarantine work.

Class resumption is a very tricky matter because we are talking about 900,000 students, especially those in primary schools and kindergartens. At the moment I could not say categorically, but what I can say with a bit of assurance and support from the experts is they said "Chief Executive, you don't expect to be able to resume all schools in the next month or so". It would not be possible because of the global situation that we have seen and especially because this virus is a bit tricky. There's a lot pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic cases in society, so I'm saying that even if the situation stabilises to the extent that we could resume, it will be by phases. We'll be starting with the older students in the senior secondary, so the chances for the very young kids to go back to school, say within the next one to two months, will be quite slim. But having said that I am still gearing up the production and supply of children's masks so that when the day comes, we will not be facing another problem that we could not resume because we do not have the mask supply for the kids to wear. We will keep you informed. In fact, I understand that even today, apart from the 4.30pm regular press conference, we may have another briefing by our CHP to talk about other subjects because things are changing very rapidly.

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

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## [LegCo to consider proposed resolution](#)

## under Public Finance Ordinance

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) will hold a meeting tomorrow (March 18) at 11am in the Chamber of the LegCo Complex. During the meeting, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (SFST) will move a proposed resolution under the Public Finance Ordinance to seek the Council's approval to give for a sum not exceeding \$215,865,713,000 to be charged on the general revenue for expenditure on the services of the Government in respect of the financial year commencing on April 1. The proposed resolution is set out in Appendix 1.

Dr Fernando Cheung, Mr Wu Chi-wai and Mr Andrew Wan will move four separate amending motions to SFST's proposed resolution. The amending motions are set out in Appendices 2-5 respectively.

Meanwhile, the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2020 and the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Ship Leasing Tax Concessions) Bill 2020 will be introduced into the Council for the First Reading and the Second Reading. The Second Reading debate on the Bills will be adjourned.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary for Administration will present The Government Minute in response to the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2019 and address the Council.

Members will also ask the Government 22 questions on various policy areas, six of which require oral replies.

The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the LegCo Website ([www.legco.gov.hk](http://www.legco.gov.hk)). Members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website. To observe the proceedings of the meeting at the LegCo Complex, members of the public may call 3919 3399 during office hours to reserve seats.

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## Announcement by Judiciary

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (March 17) that the registries and offices of the Labour Tribunal and the Small Claims Tribunal (except the Information Centre) will re-open on March 19 (Thursday).

To deal with the high volume of registry business anticipated in the

initial period following the re-opening of the registries, the capacity of the registries and accounts offices of the two tribunals will be suitably expanded to cope with the expected upsurge in workload. Special arrangements, including a ticketing and triage system, will also be implemented to regulate the flow of people.

Parties and other court users are urged not to do filing and other registry business in the first few days of the re-opening of these registries, unless the matters are really urgent and must be done in the first few days of re-opening.

For court users of the Labour Tribunal whose appointment to meet a Tribunal Officer was affected by the closure of the registry, they need not go to the Labour Tribunal upon the re-opening of the registry. They should attend the registry on the date of the re-scheduled appointment as communicated to them by the Tribunal Officers by telephone.

The Information Centre of the Small Claim Tribunal will re-open on March 23 (Monday).

#### Preventive and crowd management measures

Having struck a careful balance between public health considerations and the orderly re-opening of registries, the Judiciary will continue to put in place appropriate preventive and crowd management measures for the health protection of all people who enter and remain in the court premises. Court users are required to have their body temperature taken and wear a surgical mask before they are allowed to enter and remain in the court premises. The Judiciary will constantly review the situation and introduce any new measures as appropriate.

For effective crowd management, a ticketing and triage system will be adopted to regulate the number of court users accessing and remaining in the registries and offices.

Information on the detailed arrangements will be provided and uploaded onto the Judiciary website. Court users are strongly advised to check the updated information on the Judiciary website, and follow the advice of the Judiciary staff and security personnel when they attend court premises for court business.

#### Enquiries and information updates

For general enquiries, the following hotlines will be operated from Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5.30pm:

- General Information: 2869 0869
- Labour Tribunal: 2625 0020

- Small Claims Tribunal: 2877 4068

The Judiciary will continue to post updated information, including Daily Cause Lists, messages related to the Judiciary's arrangements arising from public health considerations, and advice to court users visiting the courts during the General Adjourned Period, on the Judiciary website ([www.judiciary.hk](http://www.judiciary.hk)). Court users are advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.

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## **HAD's statement on complaints against Sham Shui Po District Council members for displaying insulting notices**

The Home Affairs Department (HAD) recently received a large number of complaints against the Sham Shui Po District Council (DC) members, Mr Lee Man-ho and Mr Lao Ka-hang, for displaying insulting notices at their joint ward office.

A spokesman of the HAD said today (March 17), "The notices displayed at the joint ward office of Mr Lee Man-ho and Mr Lao Ka-hang have caused a lot of disputes and conflict. There is a possible breach of the Code of Conduct for Members of a District Council or Its Committees in this incident. The HAD issued letters to the DC members concerned strongly advising them to remove the notices promptly in order to avoid social disturbance and damage to community harmony."

The HAD also reminded the two DC members of the guiding principles in the Guidelines on the Remuneration Package for Members of the District Councils of the HKSAR (Remuneration Guidelines), i.e. a DC member should use public funds in an open, fair and accountable manner. The display of notices at the joint ward office of the two DC members may not be consistent with the guiding principles of the Remuneration Guidelines.

Furthermore, the HAD referred the complaints to the Chairman of Sham Shui Po DC so that he can follow-up, and hoped that the Sham Shui Po DC would handle the case impartially, as well as ensuring that DC members would refrain from acts that may compromise or impair his/her integrity, impartiality, objectivity or ability to perform duties and thereby bring the DC into disrepute.

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# Illegal worker jailed

An Indian illegal worker holding a recognisance form was jailed by Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts yesterday (March 16).

During an anti-illegal worker operation conducted on March 12, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a car park in Cyberport. A male Indian, aged 27, was arrested while working as a car washing worker. Upon identity checking, he produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. A further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant.

The illegal worker was charged at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts yesterday with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. He pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. Meanwhile, he was also charged with two counts of using a Hong Kong identity card related to another person and was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment for each count. All sentences are to run concurrently, making a total of 15 months' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.