

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting with the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan today (March 10):

Reporter: Hi, Mrs Lam and Financial Secretary. I have three questions. You mentioned the number of cases are on the rise in Europe and internationally. Can you confirm that you have reached out to the consul generals of Italy and India or other countries that we will be imposing further travel restrictions on these countries? And secondly, you've also mentioned that businesses should start to resume in Hong Kong. Could we also clarify, does that also mean you are going to relax the travel restrictions against Mainland China? Does that mean some of the ports will be re-opened or relax some of the previous restrictions? If not now, when? My final question concerns this, directed to the Financial Secretary, how would you describe the fluctuations of performance of the US market in the past few days and is it only a short term or long term? Is it a longer-term effect, given the coronavirus outbreak? Would you be looking to adjust some of the economic forecasts, given the epidemic would last relatively longer? Is there other specific tax cut or relief we can look forward to? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you, I'll answer the first two questions. First is Hong Kong is an international city and an aviation hub. That's why in the last two months or so we have been keeping the consular community informed of the strategy, of the measures that we have been taking so that when the time comes then they know the background. This is a general type of briefing we have done at least twice. I personally did one and the Chief Secretary for Administration did one, attended by almost all the members of the consular community and I have also written to them and sent them my first-month report on our anti-epidemic work. That is the general type of reaching out that you have referred to. The more specific type of contact happens when we have, after full deliberations of the various factors that I have outlined in Cantonese, i.e. the number of cases confirmed in that particular country or area, the speed of the number of cases surge; thirdly is the frequency of Hong Kong people travelling to that particular country and finally is the measure taken by that respective authority in controlling the spread of the virus, having taken into account all these factors, if the Hong Kong SAR Government has decided to introduce some measures, whether it is in putting that country or area under a Red Outbound Travel Alert or impose port health requirements or quarantine requirements on arrivals from that country or region or, even more drastically, to restrict the entry of arrivals from that country, then as a matter of respect and courtesy, we will reach out to that particular consul general. That's exactly what we are doing today so that we could make the announcement within today because the last thing is for the

consul general to hear it from a press conference without being told in advance. That is the sort of reaching out in response to your question.

The second question is, when I mentioned that operation of government services and businesses and generally the operation of Hong Kong city has to resume gradually and orderly is because everybody is now saying that this epidemic will last long. I'm sure everyone will agree that we cannot put a halt to the normal business and livelihood for too long. That doesn't mean that we will relax the restrictions, in the same way that when we go back to work it doesn't mean that we are not doing social distancing. Quite on the contrary, we are being even more vigilant in ensuring social distancing, in ensuring personal hygiene, in appealing to colleagues to wash their hands more frequently, to wear a mask properly as and when necessary and so on. For the time being, because of the uncertainty in the global situation, there are no plans yet to loosen any of the measures that we have put in place, but this situation has to be reviewed almost on a daily basis. I can update you whenever changes are made, but for the time being we are imposing more restrictions in light of the global epidemic situation.

Financial Secretary: As regards the US stock market, it had been very volatile in the past week. Its further development will depend on a number of factors. The outbreak of the coronavirus, the drop in oil prices are relevant factors. But on the other hand, their own domestic economic and political situation are also relevant. For us in Hong Kong, being a small and open economy, we have to be vigilant and monitor the situation very closely. I think the first and foremost task at the moment is to roll out the various measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund as well as measures in the Budget. As to the economic forecast and whether further measures are required, we will keep an open mind and monitor the situation closely and to look at the impact of the various measures first. Thank you.

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

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 is 106.1 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

EAC Report on 2019 District Council

Ordinary Election published

The Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) Report on the 2019 District Council ("DC") Ordinary Election is published today (March 10).

The report describes how the EAC conducted and supervised the election, and sets out the detailed arrangements and relevant follow-up actions for the election. The report also contains a review of the relevant electoral arrangements in terms of acquired experience and improvement measures for future elections.

"We are grateful to the EAC for their efforts in conducting the election in accordance with the law and reviewing the arrangements for the election. We welcome the recommendations contained in the report," a Government spokesperson said.

In accordance with the requirements of the Electoral Affairs Commission Ordinance (Cap. 541), the EAC submitted the report on the 2019 DC Ordinary Election to the Chief Executive on February 24, 2020. In line with the principle of open and transparent elections and past practice, the Government agreed with the EAC's recommendation that the report should be made public. The report can be downloaded from the EAC website (www.eac.hk) and is available for viewing at the Registration and Electoral Office and the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of District Offices.

Import of poultry meat and products from Wrocławski district of Dolnośląskie in Poland suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (March 10) that in view of a notification from the General Veterinary Inspectorate of Poland about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza in the Wrocławski District of Dolnośląskie in Poland, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products, including poultry eggs, from the district with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong imported about 17 720 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and 34.26 million poultry eggs from Poland last year, according to the Census and Statistics Department.

"The CFS has contacted the Polish authorities over the issue and will

closely monitor information issued by the World Organisation for Animal Health and the relevant authorities on avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

EMSD announces test results of LPG quality in February 2020

â€‹The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (March 10) announced that the department collected eight liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) samples from auto-LPG filling stations and LPG terminals on a random basis in February 2020 for laboratory tests. The results showed that the LPG quality of all these samples complied with auto-LPG specifications.

The detailed test results are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/rl/lpg_sample_analysis_simple). Enquiries can also be made to the EMSD's hotline on 2333 3762.

In addition, the EMSD has been vetting independent third-party test reports submitted by LPG supply companies for each shipment to ensure that the quality of imported LPG complies with the specified requirements.