

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (March 16):

Reporter: In your opinion, what should be the best ratio of geographical constituencies, functional constituencies and Election Committee in LegCo? If the number of geographical seats are decreased to the lowest ratio since the city has its first direct elections, do you think if the LegCo could still reflect the public opinion? Are you confident that all legislation amendment could be done by May as suggested? Second, over the weekend, Mr Tam Yiu-chung expressed his reservation about allowing candidates to conduct judicial review against the new vetting committee screening decision while your ExCo member, Mr Ronny Tong, opined that judicial review should be allowed for transparency. What's your point of view on that? And third, for the confirmed case in the US consulate, will the consulate be subject to the same rule of closure as a business? If not, why not? And how do you see the fact that the United States, Swiss and British consulates have expressed concerns about the possible separation of children from their parents during quarantine? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. I'm afraid that as far as the first question is concerned I could not disclose any details about the actual proposals that will go into the revised Annex I and Annex II of the Basic Law, except to say that if you could look at the Decision of the National People's Congress, there are two figures, one is 1 500, the other is 90, and both are moving in the direction of expanding, rather than restricting, the representation and the participation of people in the electoral system. The future Election Committee will be expanded from the current 1 200 to 1 500 whereas the number of Legislative Council members will be increased from the current 70 to 90. I cannot go further into the details because this is the time for the Mainland officials to listen to the opinion and views of the Hong Kong people. I would just draw to your attention that when this reference was made to the Election Committee by Mr Wang Chen (Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress) in explaining the draft Decision, he emphasised that what we are aiming at in adjusting the Election Committee is to ensure that it is more broadly representative of the interests in Hong Kong, to reflect the actual situation in Hong Kong, and to ensure that in future more people will be representing the holistic interest rather than the sectoral interest in Hong Kong. I'm sure that ultimately the composition of the 1 500 and the composition of the 90 will be based on these important principles.

The second question, I will give you the same answer because whether it is the Honourable Tam Yiu-chung or the Honourable Ronny Tong, they expressed their own personal views on this very important matter. Some 1 000 people

will be met by the Mainland officials in these three days. I am sure that you will hear more views from individuals about what they like to see insofar as the revised Annex I and Annex II are concerned.

The third question is about Hong Kong's anti-COVID-19 efforts. I have to say that in such an important matter as the public health control, we are acting in strict accordance with the law, and everybody is treated equal before the law and in terms of our epidemic control measures, regardless of their race, their status, their identity, whether they are more resourceful or less resourceful. This is a fundamental principle in Hong Kong and we will abide by that principle. As far as the two confirmed cases who are staff in the United States consulate, by the way, these two cases were identified through our compulsory testing in the form of "RTD", that is "restriction-testing declaration". Otherwise – because they do not, I hope they still do not, have symptoms and they will not be easily identified – they might become very infectious in time to come. Insofar as our epidemic control work, the two confirmed cases will be sent to a public hospital for isolation and treatment, and they have already been admitted into the hospital last night. That's point number one. Point number two is for the close contacts, for example family members living in the same unit, they will be sent to the quarantine centre if they do not have symptoms yet. This is the same arrangement. But we are a compassionate government, so we have been applying this exceptional treatment where the close contacts are young children of the parents and the parents are confirmed cases. Instead of sending the very young kids on their own to a quarantine centre or ask other relatives and friends to go into the quarantine centre with these kids, we will exceptionally allow the admission of the children into the hospital as well. And of course within the hospital there will be appropriate arrangements for the parents and the kids. Again in this case we are applying that exceptional treatment, not exceptional because of the fact that they are US consulate staff, but exceptional because of the family circumstances. As far as I understand, they have a couple of children, maybe two daughters, they were also admitted into hospital last night together with the parents. By the way, just before I left my office, I received information that perhaps one of the kids has also been confirmed. This is only natural because this virus is quite infectious and they are very close contacts living in the same family.

As far as the workplace is concerned, the policy is when there is one confirmed case, then the workplace has to be subject to a compulsory testing notice. In other words, staff and visitors to that particular workplace and in this case, the US consulate, during that very specified period, they have to go through compulsory test and this has also been done.

Fourthly is we will do extensive contact tracing. The CHP, the Centre for Health Protection, will do extensive tracing of the whereabouts of these two confirmed cases working in the American consulate insofar as within the workplace and outside of the workplace. We have already discovered that they have been to some restaurants and so on. We will continue to do this work and I'm happy to notice that the US consulate also issued a press release yesterday that they will follow our advice and support our work in this aspect, and they have already closed the consulate to perform deep cleansing

of the premises like the other workplaces that have confirmed cases. We will continue to work with the US consulate to handle this case. We have no policy to deliberately separate children from their parents, but public health concerns have to be respected because it is good for the community at large.

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

Government completes enforcement action on compulsory testing notice at building in Sai Ying Pun

The Central and Western District Office together with the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), the Western District of the Hong Kong Police Force and the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) conducted an enforcement operation today (March 16) at a building in Sai Ying Pun, which was included in a compulsory testing notice earlier. The operation started at around 7am and ended at around 9.30am today.

Starting from around 7am today, residents of Tower 1, The Summa, 23 Hing Hon Road, Sai Ying Pun, were requested to provide the SMS notification received through a mobile phone or related certification containing the results of COVID-19 tests, to show that they had taken such tests as required pursuant to the compulsory testing notice of the building within the specified period issued by the Government earlier on. The Government arranged for staff to verify the testing certifications of the residents at the entrances/exits of the building, and conducted checks in the building to verify whether residents had undergone testing in compliance with the requirement.

During the operation, test records of around 170 residents were checked. Among them, one person was found to have violated the compulsory testing notice. The Government has issued a compulsory testing order to her, requiring her to undergo testing within a specified period. Non-compliance with a compulsory testing order is an offence, and offenders are liable to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety. Persons subject to testing under a compulsory testing notice should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

The Government wishes to thank the many residents who had complied with the compulsory testing notice for their co-operation to fight against the virus together. The Government will continue to enforce the law strictly. All persons subject to compulsory testing should comply with the compulsory testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notice may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Non-compliance with the order is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Central and Western District Office is grateful for the support and co-operation of the Police, the C&ED and the AMS to enable the enforcement action to be carried out smoothly. The Government understands that the enforcement process may cause some inconvenience to the residents, but hopes that the residents can understand.

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Central and Western District and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (March 15) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 9pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Central and Western District (i.e. Golden Phoenix Court, 1-2 St. Stephen's Lane; and Blocks A and M, Hing Wah Mansion, 1 Babington Path, Central and Western District) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above buildings for more than two hours from March 2 to 15, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 17. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today (March 16) and carried out

enforcement actions in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the requirements of the relevant declaration and compulsory testing notice. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at around 9am today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Kwai Tsing District Office and the Tsuen Wan District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, and the Department of Health mobilised around 340 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including canned food, cup noodles and corn kernels, etc, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks was also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today, the Government took enforcement actions in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 9am. Nine persons were found not having undergone compulsory testing and compulsory testing orders were issued to them. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

The Government hopes that the some 40 households who have not answered the door will contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government understands that the residents in the district are anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases recently, and they are worried that the resurgence of the pandemic will affect their health and livelihood. The Government hopes this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains and ease residents' worries and fear, so that they will regain confidence in resuming social and business activities

in the area, and return to a normal life.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government as a whole is united in fighting against the virus despite all the difficulties, and provided testing for all the residents in the district within a short period of time in the hope of achieving zero cases in the district.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Government finishes exercise on "restriction-testing declaration" in respect of specified "restricted area" in Sai Ying Pun and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (March 15) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 9pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Sai Ying Pun (i.e. Manifold Court, 36-46 Pok Fu Lam Road; True Light Building, 100-106 Third Street; High Park 99, 99 High Street; and Wing Cheung Building, 19-29 Western Street, Sai Ying Pun) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained.

Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above buildings for more than two hours from March 2 to 15, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 17. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.30am today (March 16) and carried out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the requirements of the relevant declaration and compulsory testing notice. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at around 9.30am today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Kowloon City District Office and the Central and Western District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health mobilised around 390 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including canned food, cup noodles, corn kernels and soy milk, etc, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks was also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.30am today, the Government took enforcement actions in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 9.30am. One person was found not having undergone compulsory testing and a compulsory testing order was issued to him. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

The Government hopes that the some 60 households who have not answered the door will contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government understands that the residents in the district are anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases recently, and they are worried that the resurgence of the pandemic will affect their health and livelihood. The Government hopes this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains and ease residents' worries and fear, so that they will regain confidence in resuming social and business activities in the area, and return to a normal life.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government as a whole is united in fighting against the virus despite all the difficulties, and provided testing for all the residents in the district within a short period of time in the hope of achieving zero cases in the district.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.