

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 this morning (January 14):

Reporter: Chief Executive, do you think China is not being very open and transparent about the Wuhan outbreak because as they didn't report any other provinces being affected at all while Hong Kong has already reported dozens of suspected cases and even Thailand has one confirmed case? So do you think it is a bit suspicious when China says no cases have been reported in other provinces? And my second question is about the barring of the head of Human Rights Watch from entering Hong Kong. Beijing's Foreign Ministry spokesman said the NGO is responsible for the social unrest in Hong Kong, so my question is whether the decision to stop him from coming to Hong Kong is a political one? And I'd also like to ask about the work of the Judiciary because the Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma said yesterday that the Judiciary is studying whether the working hours of the courts can be extended to handle the large number of cases arising from the social unrest. What do you think of that suggestion and would the Government allocate more resources to the Judiciary to handle the matter?

Chief Executive: First of all, I understand that the Mainland authorities, in dealing with this disease issue, has been communicating with the World Health Organization. I am sure that they will continue to do so. As far as relationship between the Mainland authorities and the Hong Kong health authorities in the prevention and control of diseases, we have established communication channels for many years and on this particular occasion, those communication channels have been operating. That's why I mentioned in my introductory remarks that we have received information about the disease, we have received information about the genome sequencing so that our experts could look at whether we could put in place faster systems to identify the virus. And we have also been invited to take part in this sort of trip to understand the actual efforts being made in dealing with this situation. Beyond that it is not for me to comment on how another authority has been dealing with the situation in that jurisdiction.

As far as immigration control, as usual, we will not comment on individual cases. The immigration authorities will deal with each case based on the existing legislation and the existing immigration policy taking into account the actual circumstances of the case.

As far as the Chief Justice's remarks yesterday, I have to say that we are facing some unprecedented challenges in dealing with a large number of people being arrested and probably also the large number of prosecutions

being made, which will then be taken to the court. I am extremely grateful to the Judiciary for devising various means at various levels of courts to try to speed up the court cases because we all want justice to be done effectively. And this is not the first time that the Judiciary has given us that indication. At the very early process they have already said that they have asked the various levels of court to devise appropriate means to speed up the processing of those cases, but the important thing is to ensure that it is a fair trial. If the Chief Justice has other ideas as a result of this working group, the Administration would definitely fully cooperate in terms of providing additional resources. I may just add that on the question of providing additional resources to the Judiciary, this has always been the Administration's policy. For quite some years now, we always give Judiciary the priority in the allocation of resources, and I think for many years the Judiciary has not been denied any additional resources that they have sought from the Administration. And we will continue to do so, especially under these very special circumstances.

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