

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (May 10):

Reporter: Thank you, Mrs Lam. Last week (Chief Executive-elect) John Lee said that his role is to remove the obstacles to satisfy the requirements for re-opening the border, specifically with the Mainland. What are specifically the requirements to re-open the border and what specifically are the obstacles? Thank you.

Chief Executive: As you may recall, in September last year, following a very long period of zero local cases – for almost four months, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government had been discussing with the Mainland authorities resuming quarantine-free travel into the Mainland. The then Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr John Lee, was responsible for leading the HKSAR Government delegation to discuss with the Mainland authorities, and some officials from the Central People's Government also arrived in Hong Kong to look at our anti-epidemic work so that they had a better idea of our strategy.

One of the prerequisites then was that Hong Kong had to achieve no local infections for a while. So the first thing is that, for any resumption of quarantine-free travel with the Mainland, we'll have to reaffirm whether this is still the prerequisite. And that's why I said in my last report – as you know I issued a monthly report on HKSAR Government's anti-epidemic work – at the very beginning of the report I said that Hong Kong still has to strictly adhere to a strategy to try to reduce the importation of cases, enhance its hotel quarantine and also the flight suspension mechanism, but at the same time, also need to have some sort of social distancing measures to prevent a rebound. These measures exactly are to create the necessary preconditions for resuming quarantine-free travel into the Mainland. The first thing we need to do, if it happens within my term, or John has to do if it happens within the beginning of his term, is to engage with the Mainland authorities and to understand whether what we discussed last September to December still stand as the prerequisites for the resumption of travel.

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