

Transcript of remarks of press conference on anti-epidemic measures (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference on anti-epidemic measures this morning (March 14). Also joining were the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority, Dr Tony Ko, Professor David Hu and Professor Ivan Hung. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs Lam. Hong Kong's death and infection rate has surpassed what London, New York and Singapore experienced in the past two years, and images of body bags piling up in hospitals went viral. Will you and your Government assume primary responsibility and admit that your administration has failed to take action last year when it had a chance? Will there be an inquiry as to what went wrong? And second question, both Dr Hui and Dr Hung said that the oral medications for COVID-19 should be administered at the earliest stages of infection. However, with the number of daily infections far surpassing the number of quotas available at designated clinics, how would the Government ensure that the medication can be distributed to those in need in time? Thank you.

Chief Executive: To answer your first question, throughout the more than two years of fighting the epidemic, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has put in all the necessary resources and efforts in order to keep Hong Kong people safe. We did achieve that objective of keeping Hong Kong people safe until we were hard hit by the fifth wave arising from the highly transmissible Omicron. This highly transmissible Omicron has also hit other parts of the world. As you can see, right now especially in the Asia-Pacific region, we are still seeing a very high level of cases in many of the countries and places. Unfortunately, despite the past successes, Hong Kong on this occasion is no exception to this highly transmissible wave. There's a lot of reason to that, which we have explained on previous occasions. The most saddening part of it is vaccination. We have spent over one year to promote, to encourage, to coerce people to take the jab, but unfortunately, partly because of the low infection rate in the last year or so, and partly because of anxiety and worries and so on, we have not achieved a high rate of vaccination, especially amongst the elderly, particularly amongst elderly in elderly homes. I said on a previous occasion that, with this experience in combating the fifth wave, there are a lot of things in our city that should be revisited and we should take a critical look in order to prepare us for a future public health crisis. That includes how we are going to upgrade the standard of our elderly homes. That includes how we could enhance collaboration between the medical people and the social welfare people so that we work as a team to look after the elderly in vulnerable situations. That could also include our capacity-building in many aspects. So I would hope that the opportunity will come for us to review all these

existing practices in order to enhance the safety of the people of Hong Kong.

As far as the purchase of drugs is concerned, the actual procurement was done by the Hospital Authority, but the HKSAR Government has been facilitating and supporting the procurement by the Hospital Authority. I am very grateful to the two drug companies for giving us their utmost support and co-operation. I've been in personal touch with the senior people in these two companies and we've managed to get one drug arrived in its totality in Hong Kong now, that is the MSD drug, and the other one will start to come later today. We have procured sufficient quantities of the drugs for wide application amongst people in need. Who are the people in need? The two professors have already explained to you. Thank you.

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

