

Transcript of remarks of SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, after attending a radio programme today (July 11):

Reporter: Is it even worth the risks now that you are saying major events or mega gatherings all contain risks? Would you advise other government departments and the Trade Development Council to withhold the bookfair event to contain the risks now? My second question is about your assessment about the local infection situation now compared to the second wave in March. What's your assessment comparing to that period? Why are we not having as tight social distancing measures as the previous second wave?

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, in terms of gatherings, any gatherings, there are certain risks. I think if there are gatherings that need to be held, they must have infection control measures. And also, the people flow must be very carefully orchestrated in order to lower the risks as far as possible. Of course now the epidemic is worrying, therefore we are actually assessing the risks on a daily basis. We are also trying to trace all the confirmed cases as well as all the contacts, whether they are close contacts, contacts of the confirmed cases or contacts of contacts. The Centre for Health Protection colleagues are working tirelessly to do all these. We are also doing a lot of contact tracing with regard to all the confirmed cases, including the places where they live, where they work, their whereabouts, where they go to, for example, markets and shopping malls. We are also trying to do more contact tracing of these confirmed cases' whereabouts. We are also working on testing for target groups, for example the staff of the elderly homes, taxi drivers and also workers of the catering business.

Regarding your second question about the social distancing measures, before this outbreak, I have always emphasised that we have entered into a new normal. Therefore, the society would have to understand that the virus is always with us. Looking at the experience of other countries, for example, Japan and Korea, when they go back to the normal life, the epidemic situation and the number of cases have increased. This is expected. But of course in this situation whereby we have in a short time a large number of cases spreading over different places such as elderly homes and small eateries as well as there are taxi drivers infected and also in some of the public housing estates, this is very worrying. But we have experience in handling all these, be it contact tracing, testing, quarantine and isolation. These are our major strategies right now.

The second strategy is that we have also tightened the social distancing measures. These are the social distancing measures under laws, that is Cap. 599F. But it doesn't mean there are other social distancing measures that the public cannot deploy themselves, for example, wearing masks especially when

they are not eating even in a restaurant. There are also other measures. For example, I would appeal to the public to try to stay at home and not to go to gatherings as far as possible, at least at this initial period. After we have continuously assessed the situation, we do not preclude that there will be other measures.

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