

CE's opening remarks at press conference (with photos/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, together with Secretaries of Department and Directors of Bureau, held a press conference today (October 4). Following are the opening remarks by Mrs Lam:

I would like to say a few words in English. Protests arising from the Fugitive Offenders Bill have continued for nearly four months now. Over this period, protesters' violence has been escalating and has reached a very alarming level in the past few days, causing numerous injuries and leading Hong Kong to a chaotic and panic situation. We are particularly concerned that many students are participating in these violent protests or even riots, jeopardising their safety and even their future. As a responsible government, we have the duty to use all available means in order to stop the escalating violence and restore calmness in society.

As the current situation has clearly given rise to a state of serious public danger, the Chief Executive in Council decided at a special meeting this morning to invoke the power under the Emergency Regulations Ordinance and make a new regulation in the name of Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation, which is essentially an anti-mask law, something which has already been introduced in a number of jurisdictions around the world and discussed here in Hong Kong. We believe that the new law will create a deterrent effect against masked violent protesters and rioters, and will assist the Police in its law enforcement. The Secretary for Security will later explain in greater details the provisions and the Secretary for Justice will speak on the legal matters.

I would like to emphasise that the decision to invoke the Emergency Regulations Ordinance is a difficult but also a necessary one for public interest. Let me make four points in conclusion.

One – although the Ordinance carries the title "Emergency", Hong Kong is not in a state of emergency and we are not proclaiming that Hong Kong is entering a state of emergency. But we are indeed in an occasion of serious danger, which is a stated condition in the Emergency Regulations Ordinance for the Chief Executive in Council to exercise certain powers, and I would say that we are now in rather extensive and serious public danger. It is essential for us to stop violence and restore calmness in society as soon as possible. We hope that the new legislation can help us to achieve this objective.

The second point I want to make is the objective of this regulation is to end violence and restore order, and I believe this is now the broad consensus of Hong Kong people.

The third point is this regulation targets rioters or those who resort

to violence. That's why the regulation contains defence and exemptions to cater for legitimate needs to wear a mask, and we believe that by so doing we have struck the necessary balance.

Fourth, the regulation is a piece of subsidiary legislation subject to negative vetting. So when Legislative Council resumes on October 16, the regulation will be tabled in the Legislative Council for members' discussion.

Finally, let me reiterate that I and my principal officials will continue our dialogue with the public, for it is the best way to find solutions to some of the deep-seated social problems in Hong Kong and to allow Hong Kong to move forward.

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

