

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (November 16):

Reporter: Hello Mrs Lam. So, can I take what you just said as a denial of a news report today suggesting that there'll be a further requirement imposed on flight crew to be home quarantined for 14 days, and if that is still true, does that mean it would not apply to cargo flights' pilots?

Chief Executive: I have not read the so-called report that you referred to because I was in a function this whole morning. What I said was, as a result of a total of three cases of cargo crew being infected and confirmed upon return to Hong Kong during the regular testing, the Government, together with the airline, that is Cathay Pacific, had been in close discussion over the last few days and various enhancement measures have been imposed as a result of those discussions.

Reporter: The Economist magazine said the Immigration Department has refused to renew the working visa of its China correspondent, Wong Sue-lin. The incident, apparently not the first of its kind in recent years, has raised concerns from the foreign press community. Will the Government be able to provide assurances to foreign journalists that their visa applications will be handled in a timely and transparent manner? And also, could you explain why the Government has decided not to renew Ms Wong's working visa? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, the issue of visa is the autonomy and the discretion of any government. For example, standing here as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I've been denied visa into the United States of America. Although I would dispute that, but that was the autonomy and the discretion of the US Government. It is always the discretion of the Director of Immigration to decide on the circumstances of each case whether they will grant or extend a visa, or impose certain conditions on a visa. We do not comment on individual cases. That's point number one.

Point number two is, Hong Kong is an international city, and we are very proud of being a hub for overseas media. I am sure you know that we have a large number of overseas media based in Hong Kong, some of them using Hong Kong as their regional base to operate in the Asia Pacific region. We will continue to facilitate their stay, operation and employment in Hong Kong in accordance with our policy. And of course, we now also have a piece of law called the National Security Law. In all aspects of Government activities, national security is clearly a very important consideration.

Thirdly, you asked for assurance. The assurance is provided in the Basic Law, but everything has to be done in a legitimate manner. The best way to give assurance is to look at the actual facts and figures. I understand that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman yesterday has quoted some figures. Those figures came from us. They are Immigration Department's figures on how many employment visas we have granted to overseas media over the past period, and specifically, how many of those were granted to a particular media outlet. Those are the best explanations of the Hong Kong SAR Government continuing to operate and to facilitate the operation of overseas media in Hong Kong.

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