

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (November 24):

Reporter: Research has shown that vaccines developed in the US and the UK have a 90 per cent success rate and may be rolled out next month, while Brazil is expecting regulatory approval for the vaccine developed by Sinovac. What is your administration's plan to secure vaccines for Hong Kong and when will you have the details of when a vaccine will be made available? Second question, Hong Kong has not been able to stamp out COVID-19 cases. Experts point to loopholes in the current system of contact tracing, quarantine and testing of incoming travellers that allowed infected individuals to enter the territory. How would mandatory testing be implemented effectively if the Government cannot identify all close contacts and would the Government consider tightening existing measures such as extending the quarantine period to 21 days as Professor Yuen Kwok-yung recommended? And, third question, you have spoken about consulting Beijing on the Policy Address, and as of this month, there are no opposition forces left in the legislature, opposition candidates have been banned, parties banned, annual town hall public forums and regular legislative Q&As were axed. In light of this, how will you prevent yourself from being isolated from hearing any opposition or voices of the general public? Thank you.

Chief Executive: There are three questions. First is on a vaccine, we are very delighted to learn about the positive news coming out from the World Health Organization and also from individual research institutions about the development in the COVID-19 vaccine. As the Secretary for Food and Health has mentioned many times and we have got the money from the Finance Committee some time ago, we have enough money to procure vaccines to safeguard the health of the Hong Kong people. It's on a dual track. One is we have joined the international arrangement, the COVAX. The other is we have been discussing, negotiating and signing advance purchase agreements with some of these research companies and drug production companies, but I'm not supposed to give you the details, that is to be preserved, to be kept on a confidential basis. As you know some of the vaccines are being developed in the Mainland and I have also asked the Central People's Government that, we will be on our own to procure, but if needed, then the Central Government will also lend us a helping hand in supply of vaccine.

The second question is made up of many parts. I could only respond by sharing with you that this COVID-19 pandemic is of a magnitude that one has not seen, is a major challenge for humanity all over the world, perhaps except our own country, which has through very vigorous measures managed to control the pandemic and hence, the economy has rebounded and other things

have been happening. As far as Hong Kong is concerned, we continue in a very vigilant manner to fight the epidemic and also to introduce various measures that are necessary. This morning, I have described to you how we will step up testing on a mandatory basis and also on a target-group basis. I've also given you a preview that later today we will announce measures to tighten the social distancing measures in order to control the spread of the disease, especially in light of this big cluster arising from the dancing halls. If our experts and our evidence, whether it is local or international, clearly show that there are more effective means to do it, or we need to adjust our measures, then of course we will do it.

But I just want to give Hong Kong people a general sit-rep of where we stand. Globally-we have to look at it globally because this is a global pandemic-Hong Kong is not doing bad at all. There are several indicators of how a territory or country is handling this COVID-19 pandemic. One is the confirmed cases per one million population, the other is deaths per one million population and the third is the tests per one million population. If one looks at all those international statistical compilations, you will realise that Hong Kong is not doing bad at all. Let's have confidence in ourselves that by putting in our best efforts, by government taking the lead and by individual citizens playing their part. This is still the time for avoiding close contact. This is still the time for not going into high-risk places. If people are not complying, then I will find it very difficult to manage the situation. But we will try. We'll never give up because this is concerning the health and the safety and the well-being of people of Hong Kong.

On the third question, if I may correct you, I am not consulting Beijing on the Policy Address. I am compiling my own Policy Address as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). But it is clear to everyone that if we want our economy to bounce back, there is no better place than the Mainland of China for us to tap into because other parts of the world are still struggling with the pandemic and with high unemployment rate, with economic slowdown and so on. A couple of months ago, I have put to the Central Government a list of issues that I feel are important to help Hong Kong's economy to revive. They may not be immediate measures, but they are the measures which will help Hong Kong's economy to grow and hence give Hong Kong people more confidence at this difficult time, so consulting Beijing was on those individual measures that the HKSAR Chief Executive have put forth. It's not on the Policy Address. I don't think they have any interest in other things which concern maybe livelihood and others.

To answer your final thing about whether I will continue to hear from the people, I would say that with a more rational Legislative Council, it actually provides a much better platform for myself and my senior officials and my departmental colleagues to be engaged with the Legislative Councillors on issues of mutual concern. And where that project or that piece of legislation is doing good for Hong Kong, then it should be approved as soon as possible. Similarly, I would very much like to go into the community to organise more sessions, to meet with the people. But you would remember what has happened since June last year. Whenever there was any news about the

Chief Executive going to a place, there will be on the social media this mobilisation of the rioters to meet me. Now that with the national security law, law and order has been restored. Chaos has been replaced by peacefulness. I am very willing, very ready to go to meet the people of Hong Kong.

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

