

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting with the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, today (February 11):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, just now, you talked about the Hong Mei Estate in Tsing Yi. But you mentioned there are still nine households where the Government's work continued to be done, so can you explain a little bit more what's happening at those nine households? And as the Government tried to evacuate the residents, has any household or resident been refusing to leave the premises, or if they refuse to leave the estate, is there any legal responsibility that they have to bear? And secondly, you've already explained there are people who refuse to be quarantined at home and you said if they continue to refuse, they will be asked to wear these smart wristbands but officials previously have already explained that even if they wear those wristbands, there's no way to track where they are, so would the Government consider stronger measures to be adopted on these people? And number three, Professor Sophia Chan yesterday mentioned that she would strongly urge operators of karaokes and cinemas to stop operation for about two weeks. But again, the Government is just urging them to do that. If they refuse to stop operation, would the Government consider stronger measures to shut them down or compel them to stop their business? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Well, thank you. I will answer the second and third questions and then invite Professor Chan to address the Tsing Yi case, but as I said, the situation is still ongoing, so I will appeal to you to have a little bit of patience. When we have finished the investigation later today by both the engineering team and the public health team, and they have reported to me and Professor Chan on the situation, we will certainly give you a fuller account on the actual situation. Let's see whether Professor Chan has anything to add to the nine households who have yet to be contacted.

About the people subject to the compulsory quarantine, the first thing is these people will have to shoulder criminal liabilities if they do not comply with the conditions in the quarantine order. Like many other things, there are consequences for non-compliance but if the individuals, they never mind, they are willing to shoulder the criminal liabilities of not complying, then we will have to do the law enforcement actions as I mentioned in the second measure that we will introduce. But let me just make this clear again – in order to fight this virus, Hong Kong needs the full co-operation and active participation of every member of society. This is a time for social cohesion. This is a time for every one of us to display civic responsibility. For people subject to 14-day quarantine, I understand sometimes it's a bit

difficult to stay at home for a full two weeks but they are doing a service to this fight against the virus by staying at home. I hope that they are not those who deliberately refuse to comply. They may have some personal reasons that they want to go out for a while. Once we catch them, we will issue a warning and then we may put them on the wristbands and we may send them to the quarantine centre so that there is better assurance that they will comply. But the other leg of this enforcement is we will do all we could, the various means that I have described, to check their compliance by using WhatsApp software, by calling them up and also by random spot checks to their homes by the relevant officers. We will continue to do so. If they need support and hence they need to go out, then they could call our hotlines. The colleagues in the Home Affairs Department are running 37 hotlines and the Social Welfare Department has mobilised over 100 colleagues and volunteers to provide services like meals and medicines and other things. We will provide as much as possible facilitation to ensure that they could comply and stay at home.

The third point is – yes, as part and parcel of enhancing social distancing, we are making an appeal to the people of Hong Kong to stay at home as much as possible. This means that they should avoid some social interactions and participation in social activities and family reunions and friends meeting and so on. But at the moment, we are making this appeal, we are not going for compulsory closures because Hong Kong is a free society and I believe that many of these operators are already taking very strong precautionary measures that while they are opening their venues for business, they are also very concerned about infection, so they're doing all sorts of measures to ensure that even if customers are coming in, there are sufficient precautionary measures to avoid infections taking place in their venues.

Secretary for Food and Health: The staff of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) have actually gone through all the 34 households last night. Of the households that they have contacted and have done the epidemiological investigations, there are nine households that they cannot contact. They will continue the work today. As far as the situation of the nine households is concerned, some of them (the households) have not replied when they (CHP staff) tried to contact them. They will continue the work today because they are not sure if they (the households) were asleep or actually no one was in the unit.

Reporter:... legal consequences?...

Chief Executive: Again as I said, let's wait until the colleagues have done some investigation and we will explain to you the situation, hopefully, later today.

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