

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 today (May 5):

Reporter: First question, regarding House Committee, the legal advice actually says Starry Lee can hold meetings to sort out urgent matters. What in your mind would be urgent matters? Are they livelihood issues such as the maternity leave increment, or are they for example, the National Anthem Law, which is a more controversial and political issue? Which of them do you think is more urgent and the House Committee should take priority? Second question, with regards to the social distancing measures, will you be modifying the parameters anytime soon? For example, relaxing the four-person limit to eight? Or for example, reopening some public places such as cinemas and schools and pubs? How soon will Hongkongers be able to resume their lives to a more normal state? And the third question with regards to reports over police officers, one of the high-ranking officers was found living in a flat under the GLL (government land licence), a building under the GLL. Do you think such conduct is acceptable and other reports indicated he has also leased out a building under GLL. Do you think that is acceptable? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. I'll answer the third and the second first. As far as social distancing measures, I have explained on this occasion last week the three factors that the Government has to take into account in deciding on the lifting measures under a "suppress and lift" strategy. I do feel very strongly, and also echoed by many people in society, that the time for some relaxation, for some lifting of the restrictions that we put on the social contacts has come. I would just appeal to you to be a little bit more patient. We will make the decision and announce it as soon as possible.

As far as the third question, as I've said on many occasions, nobody is above the law. The law will be applied in the same manner regardless of the status, the background, the political affiliation of that particular person. As far as I am concerned, as the Chief Executive of Hong Kong and also as an individual, no law-breaking behaviour is acceptable. But it is not for me to stand here to judge each and every case because every case or every complaint has to be investigated and analysed by the law enforcement agencies and I am sure that they will do it as diligently as possible and will give a full account to society especially given the recent concerns.

As far as the House Committee, I have the opportunity of reading the advice given by the two Senior Counsels. I do not recall reference that the House Committee's current Chairwoman only has powers when the matter is

urgent. I do not recall reading that particular reference. I can only say that as far as I understand from the Senior Counsels' advice, they have made it very clear, having analysed what has happened in the House Committee meetings over the last six months, that if the presiding member's only role and function is to help to elect the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the House Committee, then many of the matters raised by him as a presiding member and also discussed in the House Committee's 30 hours' meetings are irrelevant. They are irrelevant to the purpose of electing the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the House Committee including the debates on the security of the LegCo building and advocating some non-binding motions and so on.

The second point that the Senior Counsel has observed during the very detailed scrutiny of the deliberations is that there was at least one occasion on March 13 in the House Committee meeting that gave people very clear impression that the delaying of the election by the presiding member of the House Committee was quite deliberate, and deliberate for political reason.

And the third thing that I observed from the Senior Counsels' advice is having regard to all these circumstances, they are of the firm view, this is a word taken from the Senior Counsels' statement, that the prevailing Chairwoman of the House Committee should have the responsibility and the power to deal with the business of the House Committee. What I am now expecting, and which the Honourable Starry Lee has agreed, is for the prevailing House Committee Chairwoman to exercise her power. Thank you.

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