

## Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (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 (December 14):

Reporter: With the first Mainland Omicron case reported, is it still prudent to keep the border voting arrangement for tens of thousands of people going to the border to vote? Will it be too much of an infection risk? And the second question, about the Nanjing Massacre video footage, are there any official detailed guidelines on what to show and what not to show to young students? And the last question, why is the Government providing free transport on election day when polling stations are mostly close to voters' home? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Of the three questions, let me address them one by one. The emergence of this new variant, Omicron, is inevitably causing a great deal of concern globally, as you have seen. The total number of cases has surged again to over 700,000 every day, particularly in the European region. Every government is now on the alert to prevent Omicron from spreading into their community. In the case of Hong Kong, we are particularly alert because we have basically attained "zero infection" in the local situation and we are right at the moment preparing to resume some normal travel into the Mainland, which is the No. 1 priority of many people in society. We have to adopt very stringent measures to prevent Omicron from spreading into the community. So far, I will say that we are successful. All the seven confirmed cases of Omicron were detected during the "test-and-hold" arrangement at the Hong Kong International Airport or during the mandatory quarantine period. At this moment, I do not see any change to what we are doing in terms of resumption of normal travel into the Mainland as a result of Omicron. But because this variant and the whole situation could be changing very rapidly, I could provide no absolute guarantee. It is gratifying for me to say that negotiations or discussions between the two sides, that is between the Hong Kong SAR Government and the Mainland authorities are still going on. Today, the Chief Secretary for Administration is leading a Hong Kong Government delegation to meet with Guangdong officials and other relevant officials in Shenzhen to take forward the preparatory work.

About the teaching of the very tragic event of Nanjing Massacre in schools, I have to emphasise that learning Chinese history is absolutely important for school education. That's why in this term of Government from the 2018 school year, we have made Chinese history a separate subject, which is compulsory for the junior secondary students. While learning history is of paramount importance, how to learn is something that we would defer to the education sector, because we have very well-trained teachers, well-run schools with their own committee and so on. It is not for the education officials to dictate or, as you have put it, to provide very detailed

guidelines on what to show, when to show, and so on. The Education Bureau has a duty to remind schools that since Chinese history is a subject to be learned, what teaching materials are available in the public domain, and that video which has caused some anxiety is something available in the public domain so they have included it in their teaching materials checklist. I believe the Education Bureau has not mandated that all teaching on the Nanjing Massacre has to show that video. It is a matter of professional judgement by the teachers.

About the provision of free transport on voting day, that is on December 19, this Sunday, this Legislative Council General Election is important in many respects. It is important because some 4.5 million voters will have a chance to select their preferred candidate to represent themselves in the new Legislative Council (LegCo). This is a question of exercising civic responsibility. It is also important because it is the first Legislative Council General Election after the improvements to Hong Kong's electoral system, and those improvements are crucial to bring Hong Kong back to the right track of "One Country, Two Systems", and to ensure that we are in a situation of "patriots administering Hong Kong" and to help LegCo to return to normalcy. That is, they will act in a pragmatic and rational manner, discharging their constitutional duties to monitor the work of the Government, but at the same time also help Hong Kong to move forward. With all due significance, I'm pleased to say that many non-government entities, including the business sector, are also helping us to promote the election, to appeal to voters to come out to cast their votes which is something that I think is a very positive sign. For the franchise transport companies, including the Mass Transit Railway, the buses and the tram, I believe they also have this corporate responsibility to do something. Upon discussion between the Transport and Housing Bureau and these companies, they agree to provide free transport on that day. It is not a direct or a correlated act, that because we want people to vote, that's why we provide free transport. It is because as you have rightly observed, many of the 600-plus polling stations are designed to be very close to the voters. They may not need to take a bus or Mass Transit Railway to go to vote. This is more a gesture of collective responsibility to remind people that December 19 is a crucial day. We welcome you to come out, you can take the bus, you can go elsewhere but also go to a polling station to cast your vote. Thank you.

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