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 (June 1):

Reporter: How are full-vaccinated senior executives from listed company different than any other full-vaccinated person? What makes them eligible to skip the quarantine but others cannot? The second question, how do you respond to those who argue that it is inconsistent with the science to ban protest while allowing indoor art fairs when research shows only a tiny percentage of coronavirus infections are acquired outdoors? Thank you.

Chief Executive: On the two questions, first is, I must point out that from the very beginning when the Government passed regulations to restrict arrivals from the Mainland or from other parts of the world under what we call the Cap. 599C, in respect of other parts of China, and Cap. 599E, in respect of other parts of the world, there is always this exemption scheme that will empower the Government to exclude certain categories of arrivals from the prevailing quarantine arrangement, whether it is home quarantine, hotel quarantine, 14 days or 21 days. There is always that exemption scheme. And the authority to exempt has been delegated to the Chief Secretary for Administration. In the past 15, 16 months, the Chief Secretary for Administration has been granting exemptions either by categories or by individuals where the cases justify that exemption. For example, scientists travelling to Hong Kong or people who are involved in the production of PPE (personal protective equipment) have to come to Hong Kong, to put them under quarantine defeats the purpose of the whole regime. That is point number one. We are not creating a new regime. We are not creating a new piece of law. That is always there.

The time has come for us to consider the revival of Hong Kong's economy because, as you will realise, the situation has fast stabilised since the fourth wave hit us. In examining the economic activities that Hong Kong has to conduct at any point in time, there is a very important area called the "financial centre" because after all Hong Kong is an international financial centre. So the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, in consultation with the regulatory authorities, has proposed that we should provide an alternative arrangement for these senior executives to come so that they can continue to conduct very essential economic activities in Hong Kong.

But let me make it very clear, if I may also draw your attention to some of the guidelines issued, it is not a free-for-all situation. These senior executives, who have to be recognised individually by the regulatory bodies, whether it is the Securities and Futures Commission, the Insurance Authority or the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, they have a real genuine business purpose to come to Hong Kong. And when they are given that exemption to come

to Hong Kong without being subject to the usual, prevailing quarantine arrangements, they are subject to another set of — we still call it quarantine arrangement — which restricts their behaviours and their activities. They have to stay in one designated spot, and then they have to travel to another designated spot for the business, for example, attend a meeting, consult lawyers on their IPOs and whatnot, and then they have to go back to that designated spot. They could not go out to the community at all. Even their itinerary is being controlled. I think we have struck the right balance; on the one hand in recognition of the economic needs of this city, and on the other hand we have served the needed public health purposes.

As far as the second question, since the protests and the assemblies have been objected to by the Police, and the applicant has already appealed and the appeal has been dismissed, what we have to do is to act in accordance with the law. I do not have a second opinion on this matter.

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