

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (March 16):

Reporter: In your opinion, what should be the best ratio of geographical constituencies, functional constituencies and Election Committee in LegCo? If the number of geographical seats are decreased to the lowest ratio since the city has its first direct elections, do you think if the LegCo could still reflect the public opinion? Are you confident that all legislation amendment could be done by May as suggested? Second, over the weekend, Mr Tam Yiu-chung expressed his reservation about allowing candidates to conduct judicial review against the new vetting committee screening decision while your ExCo member, Mr Ronny Tong, opined that judicial review should be allowed for transparency. What's your point of view on that? And third, for the confirmed case in the US consulate, will the consulate be subject to the same rule of closure as a business? If not, why not? And how do you see the fact that the United States, Swiss and British consulates have expressed concerns about the possible separation of children from their parents during quarantine? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. I'm afraid that as far as the first question is concerned I could not disclose any details about the actual proposals that will go into the revised Annex I and Annex II of the Basic Law, except to say that if you could look at the Decision of the National People's Congress, there are two figures, one is 1 500, the other is 90, and both are moving in the direction of expanding, rather than restricting, the representation and the participation of people in the electoral system. The future Election Committee will be expanded from the current 1 200 to 1 500 whereas the number of Legislative Council members will be increased from the current 70 to 90. I cannot go further into the details because this is the time for the Mainland officials to listen to the opinion and views of the Hong Kong people. I would just draw to your attention that when this reference was made to the Election Committee by Mr Wang Chen (Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress) in explaining the draft Decision, he emphasised that what we are aiming at in adjusting the Election Committee is to ensure that it is more broadly representative of the interests in Hong Kong, to reflect the actual situation in Hong Kong, and to ensure that in future more people will be representing the holistic interest rather than the sectoral interest in Hong Kong. I'm sure that ultimately the composition of the 1 500 and the composition of the 90 will be based on these important principles.

The second question, I will give you the same answer because whether it is the Honourable Tam Yiu-chung or the Honourable Ronny Tong, they expressed their own personal views on this very important matter. Some 1 000 people

will be met by the Mainland officials in these three days. I am sure that you will hear more views from individuals about what they like to see insofar as the revised Annex I and Annex II are concerned.

The third question is about Hong Kong's anti-COVID-19 efforts. I have to say that in such an important matter as the public health control, we are acting in strict accordance with the law, and everybody is treated equal before the law and in terms of our epidemic control measures, regardless of their race, their status, their identity, whether they are more resourceful or less resourceful. This is a fundamental principle in Hong Kong and we will abide by that principle. As far as the two confirmed cases who are staff in the United States consulate, by the way, these two cases were identified through our compulsory testing in the form of "RTD", that is "restriction-testing declaration". Otherwise – because they do not, I hope they still do not, have symptoms and they will not be easily identified – they might become very infectious in time to come. Insofar as our epidemic control work, the two confirmed cases will be sent to a public hospital for isolation and treatment, and they have already been admitted into the hospital last night. That's point number one. Point number two is for the close contacts, for example family members living in the same unit, they will be sent to the quarantine centre if they do not have symptoms yet. This is the same arrangement. But we are a compassionate government, so we have been applying this exceptional treatment where the close contacts are young children of the parents and the parents are confirmed cases. Instead of sending the very young kids on their own to a quarantine centre or ask other relatives and friends to go into the quarantine centre with these kids, we will exceptionally allow the admission of the children into the hospital as well. And of course within the hospital there will be appropriate arrangements for the parents and the kids. Again in this case we are applying that exceptional treatment, not exceptional because of the fact that they are US consulate staff, but exceptional because of the family circumstances. As far as I understand, they have a couple of children, maybe two daughters, they were also admitted into hospital last night together with the parents. By the way, just before I left my office, I received information that perhaps one of the kids has also been confirmed. This is only natural because this virus is quite infectious and they are very close contacts living in the same family.

As far as the workplace is concerned, the policy is when there is one confirmed case, then the workplace has to be subject to a compulsory testing notice. In other words, staff and visitors to that particular workplace and in this case, the US consulate, during that very specified period, they have to go through compulsory test and this has also been done.

Fourthly is we will do extensive contact tracing. The CHP, the Centre for Health Protection, will do extensive tracing of the whereabouts of these two confirmed cases working in the American consulate insofar as within the workplace and outside of the workplace. We have already discovered that they have been to some restaurants and so on. We will continue to do this work and I'm happy to notice that the US consulate also issued a press release yesterday that they will follow our advice and support our work in this aspect, and they have already closed the consulate to perform deep cleansing

of the premises like the other workplaces that have confirmed cases. We will continue to work with the US consulate to handle this case. We have no policy to deliberately separate children from their parents, but public health concerns have to be respected because it is good for the community at large.

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