

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session (with photo/video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, and the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at a media session after meeting leaders of the Guangdong Province, Guangzhou and Shenzhen via video conferencing today (September 1):

Reporter: About the arrangement to have people quarantine in Hong Kong before crossing the border to the Mainland, is there any preliminary details you can share with us, like the quota, the duration; and does this arrangement mean that Hong Kong has already given up a quarantine-free arrangement with the Mainland? My second question is about reopening the border with the rest of the world, because Hong Kong is trying to resume normal travel with the Mainland and Mainland puts an emphasis on preventing imported cases. How can Hong Kong further reopen the border with the rest of the world under these circumstances? Thank you.

Chief Executive: In the proposal of undergoing quarantine in Hong Kong for people who wish to travel to the Mainland, after undergoing quarantine in Hong Kong, they will be regarded as having fulfilled the "7+3" requirement of the Mainland. The main purpose is to, first of all, alleviate the burden of hotels in the Mainland by making use of the facilities in Hong Kong, so that there will be more opportunities of allowing quarantine facilities for the would-be travellers.

The second goal of this proposal is to ensure that we will have a system to allow a regular flow of people from Hong Kong into Shenzhen fulfilling the "7+3" quarantine requirement. How this is to be done, of course, will have to be examined by the task force that will be set up between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. As the purpose is to allow the would-be travellers to satisfy the "7+3" quarantine requirement as a standard procedure in Shenzhen, we have to, of course, seek agreement regarding the actual details of the implementation of the proposal, so that those who have finished the quarantine requirements in Hong Kong will be regarded as fulfilling the "7+3" quarantine requirement in the Mainland. The task force will, of course, look into every detail including how, after the quarantine requirement, they will be going from Hong Kong into the Mainland without contamination. These details will be worked out closely by the task force. I'm sure that with the indication from the leaders of the governments in the Mainland, in Guangdong and Shenzhen, there will be a way to ensure that the details will be worked out and then be endorsed according to the normal procedure, and then implemented. We will try to do this fast. As always, we want to ensure the action comes quickly.

This proposal of undergoing quarantine in Hong Kong, so as to fulfil the "7+3" requirement in Shenzhen, is in no replacement of other measures that we always try to seek, so as to allow more convenience for people to

travel from Hong Kong to the Mainland. We are working on all possible options, and there has been good dialogue between Hong Kong and the Mainland authorities. We are looking at all options besides this new quarantine arrangement. As regards the connectivity with the world, it's always my intention and the Government's intention to allow maximum connectivity with the world. That is why we have suspended the circuit breaker system regarding flights, and also introduced the "3+4" and Red and Amber Codes arrangements, so as to allow more activities and allow more convenience for people who, according to the risk groups, need not be subject to very tight special arrangements.

But one important thing I think is we have to realise is that the number of infected cases in Hong Kong is high, an average of 8 000 to 10 000 (per day). This is not just a threat to the very old and the very young who do not have a high vaccination rate, this is posing a serious threat to the public hospital service. Because of the large number of infected cases, the number of people that need to get into hospital is rising and it's rising fast. We have already cut public hospital service by 30 per cent. So we need to control the number of infected cases so as to ensure the public service continues to provide service. That is needed for society. It is a threat, which we have to take into consideration seriously. The trend is still going up. We'll do our best so that the pace of increase will be reduced, and hopefully it will actually come down. That is why we have introduced various measures to try to lower the figure of infected cases. We also need the community to all work together so that the number of infected cases will come down. And, if the number of cases comes down, there will be more room for me to do extra things so as to ensure that the normal activities of Hong Kong, and also visits to and out of Hong Kong, can be given the maximum possibility.

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

