

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan; and the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority, Dr Tony Ko, today (July 7) met the media on the latest prevention and control measures in connection with COVID-19. Following is the transcript of remarks made by Professor Chan:

Reporter: First of all, domestic helpers coming into Hong Kong will be asked to be quarantined at hotels for 14 days. How many hotels have agreed to this as it is summer time, many hotels are offering discount? How has the sector responded to the new decision? Second, air staff and crew ship staff are required to additional testing when they land in Hong Kong. Can you explain a bit more and also why is the burden now being passed onto the countries where they are coming from? The third question, will these new cases, especially with the cases in shipping ports, delay the establishment of the travel bubble and when will we see health code come to light again?

Secretary for Food and Health: The situation is that, first of all, in the recent two weeks, we have cases coming from places, for example, Philippines and Indonesia, are confirmed positive in terms of coronavirus. Another thing is that the flats in Hong Kong are very small. Therefore, in order to let domestic helpers coming to Hong Kong to have effective quarantine, it is important for them to have a place whereby fulfilling the Department of Health's guidelines and requirements. They should have a single room and do not share toilets with others, etc. Therefore, we have discussed that it is important for them to come together to a designated place for quarantine. Hotel will be one of the places that is suitable for this purpose. Secondly, it is also important for the employers to require them to have pre-boarding testing or pre-arrival testing so that we know that they are at least tested negative at the time before they arrive in Hong Kong. Of course, we will continue to test them after they arrive in Hong Kong. That is something that we shall do.

Reporter: Two questions. You said it is an important alarm call for Hong Kong people and now that we have several cases with unknown sources. Why doesn't the government just tighten the social distancing measures, especially the rules at restaurants and limit the size of public gatherings? Secondly, do you think that it is still a good idea for the Book Fair to go ahead and for the theme parks to remain open?

Secretary for Food and Health: Given the current situation, social distancing measure is one of the important areas for us to look into and also to review the current situation. As you all know, we have been adopting the "suppress and lift" strategy all along. In the past, when we have a more stable situation in terms of this epidemic, we are in the lifting mode. So, we have been lifting many social distancing measures, namely the Cap.599G and Cap.599F – scheduled premises, restaurants and also the prohibition of

gathering. But now we have come to a stage where we have this alarm whereby a number of local cases and at least one of them we do not know the source, or at least the Centre for Health Protection is now looking into, trying to trace its source. Therefore, I think, if we look at "suppress and lift", now comes a time for suppression. So, the direction is suppression. We would, first of all, look into all these measures that we have relaxed previously, and see how and also when, we are going to suppress. Secondly, we would continue to look into, or monitor the epidemic situation and also the local cases. We are yet to receive more information about contact tracing and also the (COVID-19) test results. Those are important information for us to take into consideration.

Your question about theme parks and the Book Fair. They are under PPE (Place of Public Entertainment) licence, that is, one of our scheduled premises. When we review the situation, obviously all those licensed premises that are scheduled premises under Cap.599F would be reviewed altogether.

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