

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, after attending a radio programme today (April 18):

Reporter: Would the situation a kind of a rebound? Is there a need to delay the "vaccine bubble" plan that the Government is planning? Also, why is it not the time to lengthen the hotel quarantine to 28 days? And to strengthen the flight ban mechanism?

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all we are very concerned about the rebound. There are two areas of concern, first is about the gatherings and all the activities during the Easter holidays. We actually envisage that there could be some rebound, and now see the rebound with the increased number of unlinked cases. We will continue to do all the compulsory testing and also restriction testing, as well as quarantining all the contacts and close contacts (of confirmed cases). My colleagues have been working tirelessly on contact tracing, and have increased the number of people doing the contact tracing, and also lowering the threshold for quarantining because of the VOC (variant of concern) as well as the current situation. So we continue to strengthen all these work.

As far as the import of VOC and imported cases is concerned, starting from April 14, we have already strengthened our suspension of flight mechanism. If we look at the past data, from March to now we have already suspended seven flights for 14 days from different countries. Therefore with this new mechanism, we envisage that we will be suspending more flights. Whether we will be banning boarding on the places would depend on the assessment by the Centre for Health Protection. We will continue to review the situation in a timely manner.

As far as the "vaccine bubble" is concerned, our colleagues have been meeting the catering industry in the past week, and they had a very good discussion about the implementation details of some of the relaxation measures that we have proposed under the principle of "vaccine bubble". They will be meeting again next week to continue the discussion. We have already said many times, these gradual relaxation of return to normality obviously would have to base on the stable situation of the epidemic. But in order for us to return to normality, and refrain from opening and closely these premises, we will have to add or strengthen our mitigation measures, so that the risk associated with the slight or gradual relaxation would be mitigated, and that we can ensure a safe relaxation for our community. Thank you.

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