

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session at Hong Kong International Airport

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session at the Hong Kong International Airport yesterday (March 18):

Reporter: Who would be given these bottles for further testing? Are they randomly selected or people from certain flights? Or only people from high risk areas will be tested? Is the authority targeted to get everybody a bottle for testing?

Secretary for Food and Health: Regarding the testing of the COVID-19 virus, as I have said earlier, it is the first night we start to implement the compulsory quarantine order. We shall start a pilot and randomly select some people and give them the bottles for taking specimens. This is just for tonight because we want to test the logistics and also the operation to see how best to do it and the entire procedure. When it comes to a later stage, for example in the next few days, the Department of Health will be working out a risk assessment stratified model as to how best to collect more samples. Regarding who will be given this test and whether everyone would be tested, it all depends on the capacity of our laboratory. Looking at the number of people coming back, we do not think the current capacity of the laboratory will be able to do test on all (returnees). We would have to save some capacity for close contact of confirmed cases and we need a buffer. On the one hand, we are trying our best to expand our testing and surveillance capacity to this group of returnees. On the other hand, we have to reserve some testing capacity for our confirmed cases, close contact of confirmed cases and people who are in our quarantine centres.

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