

Transcript of remarks of press conference on anti-epidemic measures

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference on anti-epidemic measures this morning (April 3). Also joining were the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, and the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority, Dr Tony Ko. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Good morning. I would like to ask, some residents living in subdivided flats have said that they can only receive one anti-COVID pack yesterday. And how can the operation be improved in these circumstances? Also, would you please elaborate on the necessity to waive CE (Chief Executive) hopefuls from abiding with the social-distancing rules? Is this needed when so many meetings could be conducted via videoconferencing? Lastly, we will like to ask how would authorities make sure that people know whether they are suitable to take those traditional Chinese medicine pills in the free packages, given that the experts have advised a wider use of Chinese medicine for patients recovering at home? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. First of all, we started distributing the anti-epidemic service bags yesterday. Out of the estimated 3.5 million bags, I was told that we have distributed almost 1.3 million bags, despite the original target to have all these distributed within a period of seven days. We are distributing them on a household basis, but my colleagues and myself are very liberal. When we delivered a bag, especially to the grassroots families living in buildings where there isn't any building management, we always asked about how many family members in the household. If we were told that they had four or five, then we would give them an extra bag. That's exactly what I did yesterday at Sai Ying Pun. There were at least two or three families with a household size of four or five, so we immediately provided a second bag to the families. For those families, whether they are living in subdivided units or in other living conditions, if they want to have an extra bag because of the size of the family or for other reasons, they could always go to the 90 service stations we are going to set up, I think on April 6 (should be April 7), serving two purposes. One is for those whom we could not reach when we visited them during our door-knocking. We would normally leave behind either a letter or a card with the information for them to collect the service bag from these stations. Secondly, we want everyone to do the RAT, the rapid antigen test, on a daily basis from April 8 to April 10, and if somehow they have used up their RAT kits which we have provided in the bag then they are also welcome to go to one of these stations to pick up some extra rapid antigen test kits. Ultimately we want everybody to be well provided and resourced in this situation. The Government will consider all means to make available the packs or the RAT kits to those residents in need.

About the CE Election, today is the beginning of the nomination period. At the press conference yesterday, I was asked by a reporter that if a

prospective CE candidate who wants to get sufficient nominations from the Election Committee (EC) – and the threshold is quite high, the candidate has to receive 188 nominations from the group of 1 460-something EC members – then the candidate will have to approach the EC members and explain his manifesto and maybe make connections and so on. Under the current very stringent social-distancing measures, particularly these two – one is the group gathering limitation to a group of two persons, the other is really a very stringent measure we introduced in February and that is prohibiting cross-family gatherings – you could imagine if a prospective candidate has to reach maybe five or six or seven EC members, they will be coming from different families, so it would not be possible for the prospective candidate to do that sort of appeal or participation in gatherings to talk about his vision and so on. I said yesterday that we will find a way, and actually we found a way and the way is provided by the legislation. There's always an exemption mechanism in the relevant regulations made under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance, that is Chapter 599 of the Laws of Hong Kong. The power has been delegated to the Chief Secretary for Administration. So yesterday, the Chief Secretary for Administration, having considered the nature of these CE Election activities as well as the importance of the CE Election, and that it is in the overall interests of Hong Kong, to make those exemptions from the two regulations that I have just mentioned. I hope people will realise that this is a very important occasion for Hong Kong and we would like to see the prospective candidates having the opportunity to seek sufficient nominations during the nomination period and thereafter, for those who have been validated as a CE candidate, to participate in all sorts of electioneering activities. The exemptions granted by the Chief Secretary for Administration were very well justified.

As far as the use of Chinese medicine is concerned, the Secretary for Food and Health has given you a full account. It is not entirely something new. Many Hong Kong people love to use Chinese medicine, whether proprietary medicine or prescription. Particularly in this term of Government Sophia and myself are very committed to promoting the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong and that's why I announced, for the first time in Hong Kong's history, that Chinese medicine has been included into the public health system. Previously, they belonged to the private sector, but now they are part and parcel of the public health system. But of course, for historical reasons and the sort of predominance of the Western medicine, it needs a long time to catch up. And this anti-epidemic fight has actually given us this opportunity to speed up the catching-up, to get Hong Kong people more familiar with the Chinese medicine, the benefits and the use of Chinese medicine, and also to supply them with the Chinese medicine, whether through proprietary Chinese medicine tablets that we are providing in the bags or through telemedicine service provided by the Hong Kong Baptist University as well as the alliance of the Chinese medicine practitioners in Hong Kong.

But anybody who uses any medicine will have to consult their doctor, they will have to read the warning notice on the medicine, including proprietary Chinese medicine. For the two packets of proprietary Chinese medicine we put into the service bag, they are not for prevention, they are for a curative purpose, especially at the early stage of the infection. If

you read the warning notices in the boxes, it's all very clear. This wide use of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong has to be based on science, based on efficacy and based on consumer education and understanding, and that's why the Chinese Academy of Sciences academician Tong Xiaolin, when he came to Hong Kong after visiting various places, said that we are making good use but we could improve in at least three aspects: making it easier to understand, making it easier to be supplied with and also making it easier for the standardisation (æ~“æ†,, æ~“èiÆ, æ~“â¾-). This has given us a very good direction to carry on with our work. Thank you.

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