

# Transcript of remarks of press conference on anti-epidemic measures (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference on anti-epidemic measures this morning (March 24). 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: Mrs Lam, Singapore's Prime Minister just announced a raft of new measures to ease pandemic curbs, including lifting most restrictions on fully vaccinated visitors and removing the mask mandate outdoors. So when will Hong Kong do the same? And has Hong Kong permanently lost its crown as Asia's global hub to Singapore? And also you said yesterday that Hong Kong's top priority is still reopening its border with Mainland China, while earlier you talked about the importance of Hong Kong as an international financial centre. So can you clarify, is it necessary for Hong Kong to first open quarantine-free travel with Mainland China before opening quarantine-free travel with the rest of the world? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, let me make it very clear that Hong Kong remains a very attractive global financial centre, a very attractive global and regional aviation hub, and also a very good place to live and work. I remain very confident that after the epidemic, Hong Kong will be able to welcome a lot of talents to come, whether in the financial sector or more recently in the technology sector, as you have heard me referring to some of the successes we have in recruiting top talents to come to Hong Kong to work in our universities on science and technology. We are going through a very difficult period with the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic, but with the support of the Central Government and all the assistance rendered to us in the last two months or so, and the co-operation of the people of Hong Kong, I think we will rise to the challenge.

As I also said on many occasions, the policies and measures to be adopted by each government in combating the COVID-19 epidemic differ. I don't think there is a one size that fits all. I also don't believe that there are only two pathways. That's why I said that perhaps it's not very meaningful to ask us to choose whether you are going for route A or route B. We will have to adjust and do whatever is in the best interest of Hong Kong. In terms of opening the border or resumption of travel, the best interest of Hong Kong is to do both – that we maintain our connectivity with the rest of the world through the aviation side, and at the same time we continue to perform the role of Hong Kong being the basis for businesses and individuals to access the Mainland market. And knowing the very prudent measures adopted by the Mainland and also the aspirations of the Hong Kong people, not only for the business purpose but also for family, personal and social purposes, towards

the end of last year we did work very hard in trying to resume quarantine-free travel with the Mainland first, and I had told you many times that we were at a very advanced stage of announcing such a scheme. So I remain very optimistic that once this wave subsides, we will pick up on the earlier discussions and at the same time we will be able to open up to the rest of the world. My announcement three days ago to lift the place-specific flight suspension was very much welcomed by the aviation sector and by people who are affected by the flight ban. Wherever we could we will react in a very pragmatic manner to preserve what is very important to Hong Kong, and that is her international connectivity and accessibility into the Mainland. Thank you.

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

