

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 (April 6). Also joining were the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Jack Chan, and the Controller of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, Dr Edwin Tsui. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs. Lam. First, we'd like to ask a few questions about the election. The Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office has not acknowledged or commented on your decision not to seek a second term. How do you view this lukewarm response regarding your decision not to pursue a second term? And can you also clarify whether you have received any resignation letters from your cabinet members at the moment? And the next questions are concerning the pandemic. For the Secretary for Security, is there enough CIF (community isolation facility) units for people whose home accommodation is not suitable for isolation? And for you yourself there are reports that you may also pursue the next level to be the Chief Secretary. Are these comments founded or baseless? And there also comments that the distribution of the pandemic care packs has not been ideal at subdivided housing units. How can people obtain these packs if they don't have the slips in their mailboxes or delivered to them?

Chief Executive: There are three sets of questions. On the first set of questions about the sixth-term Chief Executive Election, I said as a general rule, I will not comment on the elections but I can only confirm that up to this moment, or before I came into this auditorium, I had not received any resignation letter from any of my principal officials.

I can also answer part of the second question directed at the Secretary for Security and that's about capacity. In fact, one of the reasons why we proceed with this rapid antigen test for every member of the community at this point in time is our confidence in capacity. Over the last two months or so, with the support of the Central People's Government, the Hong Kong SAR Government has significantly enhanced the capacity almost at every stage of our anti-epidemic work. And of course, the cases have come down quite significantly. With a combined situation of fewer cases and more capacity, we are very confident that even if this three-day daily RAT (rapid antigen test) exercise is to give rise to a large number of positive cases, we will be able to handle it. I can give you some illustrations of our capacity. One is that we have a very sufficient stock of rapid antigen test kits. We have already distributed through the 3.5 million service bags a total of 17 million kits. We have more to supply at the various service stations that I will invite the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs to tell you again in English, and many of

these supplies were also procured with the support of the Central Government.

Second, we have a very well-tested online self-declaration system that the Controller for the Centre for Health Protection has just updated you. It could handle 60 000 self-declarations every hour.

Third, for those who have tested positive and are allowed to stay at home, we have a very well-tested and effective delivery system to deliver to them the anti-epidemic service bag. At the peak, the teams could distribute or deliver 60 000 bags to families every day. Of course now it's down to several thousands because cases have come down.

Fourth, we have a very strong fleet of designated taxis to transport infected persons from their home to the community isolation facilities.

In terms of your specific enquiry about whether we have enough CIFs, the community isolation facilities, I would tell you that we have a lot. We have 20 000 beds. Maybe we don't even need to allocate by beds; we will allocate by rooms in the six sites built with the support of the Central Government. We still have a certain number of CIF hotels. We have a block of public rental housing. We have Penny's Bay and we have six or seven holding centres which could also serve the purpose of a CIF for elderly people. In totality, we are confident that we have enough. And then if people are allowed to stay at home for isolation, we have a very strong home support scheme (StayHomeSafe Scheme), including 23 designated clinics and designated taxis to take people to the clinics and the delivery of various supplies including food items that the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs have told you. For those who are critically sick, they need hospital admission. Even in the very strained Hospital Authority hospitals, we now have more beds. We have beds waiting to treat COVID-19 patients. You need not worry about our capacity. We have the capacity. And that's why we are proceeding with this very meaningful and useful exercise.

I will now invite the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs to respond to whether the distribution of service bags could be improved and where those additional supply centres are and I will leave it to Secretary for Security whether he wishes to answer your question. Thank you.

Acting Secretary for Home Affairs: Thank you, Chief Executive. For the distribution of the anti-epidemic service bags to some 2.7 million households in Hong Kong, we have a very detailed plan and also very extensive distribution networks. Our distribution plan has two stages. The first stage was to distribute all these bags to housing units, including private housing, public housing, "three nil" buildings and those in the New Territories.

First, we sent out or delivered all these bags to the Housing Department for their onward distribution to public rental housing units, and also to property management companies for them to distribute to individual housing blocks.

As I said in the opening, as at yesterday, we have already distributed

2.65 million bags covering most of the 2.7 million households in Hong Kong. We have confidence that by close of today, we will be able to distribute all these bags to all the 2.7 million households. That would be shorter than our original plan of seven days by two days.

For public housing estates, there are about 840 000 public rental units in Hong Kong. As (from) the information gathered this morning from the Housing Department, 90 per cent of the public rental housing units have already received the bags.

And for private housing estates, we also have information from our network that all major private housing estates have already distributed these bags to the residents, including Taikoo Shing, South Horizons, Park Central or Ocean Shores. All these private housing estates have already distributed these bags to the residents. Over the last four days, we have also distributed 110 000 bags to "three-nil" households individually.

So the distribution is very smooth and effective. But those who have not received the bags in stage one, they can, starting from tomorrow, go to our backup stations. There are altogether 89 stations in 18 districts. Starting from tomorrow, they can get their bags from those backup stations. To conclude, it is a very effective and extensive network.

Secretary for Security: Thank you, CE (the Chief Executive). Regarding the question about myself, I think I enjoy being S for S (the Secretary for Security). And I will focus my work as S for S. Regarding what is next, it is not on my own agenda. Thank you.

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

