

# 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 11). Also joining were the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, and the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Can you update (us on) the latest number of people who joined the universal RAT (rapid antigen test) testing and what are the future uses of RAT apart from schools and special events? And the second question is, the Government issued a statement yesterday saying that the CE (Chief Executive) may direct the holder of another public office to exercise the power delegated to the CS (Chief Secretary for Administration) in granting exemptions from compulsory quarantine or social distancing rules. So in the absence of an Acting CS, who can John Lee's campaign office reach out to if they want to be exempted from social distancing rules regarding his election campaign? And do you mind clarifying this statement and is there any latest update on the successor of John Lee? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I do not have the figures that you asked for because apparently you were asking how many Hong Kong people have joined the RAT exercise. I have repeatedly explained that we will not have that information. One is because the rapid antigen test exercise is purely a voluntary one. Secondly, if a person has taken an RAT, but the result is negative, there is no need, no obligation whatsoever, for the person to report to the Centre for Health Protection. So we will not know how many Hong Kong residents over the last three days responded positively to our appeal and took a daily rapid antigen test.

If your question was about how many were found positive and declared to the Centre for Health Protection, we could give you a global figure on a daily basis at the 4.30pm press conference. I do not have the information that is going to be announced by the Centre for Health Protection this afternoon. But what has been announced over the last two days is in the public domain already, so you should be able to find those figures.

About future uses of a rapid antigen test as an anti-epidemic measure and also as a measure to ensure that we could resume normalcy in a gradual and orderly manner, we are telling you this morning that in order to reduce infection risks in schools, once students are going to go back to school learning – we have not said that it will be forever but initially for a period – we would require all the staff, teachers and students to take daily rapid antigen test and they could only go to the school if the test result is a negative one. If it is a positive one that they have to notify the school and declare to the Centre for Health Protection for follow-up actions.

Whether similar daily rapid antigen tests or frequent rapid antigen tests or ad hoc rapid antigen tests will be applied in a particular scenario is something that we will need to consider further. I gave you another example yesterday: when social distancing measures are to be relaxed from April 21, people will ask about local group tours. You may remember, at a certain point in time, although we did not have a lot of inbound tourists, we did encourage more local tours so that there would be jobs for the tourism industry and also to enable Hong Kong people to enjoy themselves. If there is a group tour, it is safer if all the participants in a group tour will be able to do an RAT before they board a cruise ship or a coach. That may be one of the scenarios that we will consider. We will tell you after we have ironed out all the details.

On the second set of questions concerning the vacancy of the position of the Chief Secretary for Administration, at this point in time, I have nothing to add to what I have already said in public, which means that at this point in time, the position of the CS, the Chief Secretary for Administration, remains vacant. But as I have said on several occasions, since the resignation and departure of John Lee, all the work to be done by the Chief Secretary for Administration will continue and has been continuing in the last week or so. We could ask the relevant bureau secretaries to do the work and then to escalate to my personal attention. Because very often the Chief Secretary for Administration is a higher level than the bureau secretary but ultimately responsible to the Chief Executive. For example, in processing submissions to the Executive Council, the ultimate authority rests with the Chairman of the Executive Council, which is the Chief Executive. But where the power to be exercised by the Chief Secretary for Administration is a statutory power as laid down in the Ordinance, then we have a means to overcome it, because in the Laws of Hong Kong, there is Cap. 1, the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance, which gives a lot of power to the Chief Executive.

One of the powers is if a particular public office is vacant – in other words, no person has been appointed to fill that public office – and the Laws of Hong Kong do give that public office certain powers to exercise, then under special conditions – that is, when the post is vacant – the Chief Executive could by order – it is a legal instrument I have to sign – direct another public officer to discharge those functions. And that's why we needed to clarify this position via a press release yesterday, because apparently there was a saying that the post of CS was not filled and even the Chief Executive could not do anything about it and so there were certain statutory functions that could not be discharged. That is not the case. The CE will be able to rectify or resolve that sort of situation by invoking Cap 1. to appoint by order another public officer to discharge that function.

We have already done it once by order to direct another public officer, another Principal Official, to grant exemptions under Cap. 599C (Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation) to facilitate the arrival of Mainland experts last week without subjecting them to quarantine, because they came to help us, what's the point of putting them in a seven-day or 14-day quarantine? So another public officer has been directed

via an order to exercise that power of exemption. And we will, depending on the situations and the circumstances, continue to direct Principal Officials by order, but they will vary from one to another and there are other occasions that we need to resolve. Ultimately, as we said in the press release, we will facilitate the conduct of the Sixth Term Chief Executive Election in accordance with the law. If any candidate's campaign office wishes to seek any exemptions, which are in the public interest – and because we want this election to be smooth, efficient, lawful – then they can approach the Hong Kong SAR Government. The easy way is to approach the CE's Office or the Director of the Chief Executive's Office and they need not try to find out which Principal Official has been given the power by the Chief Executive.

Thank you.

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

