

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 12). Also joining were the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, and the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: The first question is whether the Government has set a specific target to meet as to how many cases it has to reduce in a certain period of time. If the Government does not have such a goal, how can the Government assure the Hong Kong public that it can successfully combat the fifth wave of the pandemic? And also, the second question is about the remarks of Xia Baolong yesterday, because he said the anti-epidemic work in Hong Kong should be carried out as precise as acupuncture. So what area can the Government do to ensure a more precise and targeted approach when combating the epidemic? For example, does the Government agree that it should have targeted the elderly in its vaccination drive with a more aggressive and targeted approach to avoid the thousands of deaths recorded right now? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Of the two questions, first of all, we have been fighting this epidemic for more than two years like the rest of the world, and every government will have to determine its anti-epidemic policies according to the actual situation, the ability of the government and the co-operation of the people in that particular place. I could understand that people are very worried about the current fifth wave because of the tsunami-like increase in the number of confirmed cases and the number of deaths. But we mustn't forget that we have gone through four waves of the COVID-19 epidemic with, I would say, relative success – I wouldn't say we are very successful because at the same time we need to impose border control and social distancing measures. In tackling this unprecedented fifth wave, we have to examine very carefully the development of the epidemic. That's why I said that at this moment we could not comfortably say that we have passed the peak. Although some experts have said that perhaps we have passed the peak, but we'd rather take a very cautious stance that we will closely monitor the coming days to see whether we are seeing a drop in the confirmed cases, especially under the self-declaration system of those who test positive under the rapid antigen test. Of course, we would like to see the cases come down to an extent that from our experience and with the experts' advice we could call it an end to the fifth wave and then we go back to normal, and this has happened in the second wave, the third wave and the fourth wave. And the objective now is to achieve that goal as soon as possible, but it would be too simplistic for me to set a specific number – setting a specific number would mean that we are not being very scientific – because we need to take into account all circumstances.

The second question about remarks made by the Director of the Hong Kong

and Macao Affairs Office (of the State Council), I would first wish to express my deepest gratitude to Director Xia Baolong for his personal attention and tremendous efforts in co-ordinating the various ministries and commissions in the Central People's Government to support Hong Kong. As I understand, he has personally chaired eight co-ordination meetings to make sure that every request from the Hong Kong SAR Government has been attended to by the relevant ministries and commissions, and he also through his Deputy Directors communicates with me very often to convey his care and concern about Hong Kong and also to assure me as well as the people of Hong Kong that the Central People's Government is always behind us. I cannot really comment on the adjective or the description he used, but I can assure him and assure the people of Hong Kong that we are putting in every effort to fight this epidemic. We are not short of money; we will spend whatever money as required in order to get us out of this epidemic as soon as possible. More importantly, the whole of the Hong Kong SAR Government is acting as one government to tackle this epidemic. I don't want any more speculations that there are bureaus and departments that are working very hard whereas others are not doing so. I can assure you every bureau, every department has been mobilised in this fight against the epidemic.

Coming back to the elderly, as you will remember a few days ago I announced a series of measures exactly to help the elderly – to save lives, to keep them healthy, and to ensure that we could achieve the target of vaccinating as many elderly people as possible within the shortest period of time. As far as the elderly who could take a jab in the elderly care homes are concerned, the target is to complete going round all the homes and administer the vaccination on or before the March 18, and we told you yesterday that we should be able to meet this target with the participation and co-operation of all our partners from the medical community. We will continue to do so because every life is very valuable. We will do all we can to protect the elderly people of Hong Kong and also the general public. Thank you.

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

