

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 (March 10). Also joining were the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong; and the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Can I please ask how long does the Hong Kong Government plan to keep the flight bans, given that the number of imported cases is only a fraction of the local cases we're seeing in Hong Kong? And my second question is about the Compulsory Universal Testing, which is still under planning. Can you talk more about whether a lockdown is going to be used for the testing, when and if it's going to be carried out? And, if not, can you say what would a limited lockdown look like? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, I hope our reporters and members of the public will appreciate that the purpose of having these daily high-level press conferences is to focus on issues which are of public interest and concern, so that we could disseminate the accurate information in a more systematic manner. For issues that I have addressed many, many times, I have no new information to provide. It is unnecessarily taking up the time of this limited session of the press conference. I have nothing to add on the Compulsory Universal Testing, which I have answered extensively on previous occasions, including yesterday.

On your first question, I understand that a lot of people are very anxious to know when we will resume flights from the nine place-specific places where flights have been suspended for quite some time, especially for Hong Kong people who are keen to come back, and also for international business and so on. At the moment, Hong Kong is right at the most critical juncture of fighting the epidemic. In fact, at least one country has put us on their highest level of alert, forewarning their citizens not to come to Hong Kong. So this is not the time to immediately lift the bans or else as a result a lot of people will rush to come back and inevitably amongst some of those people there will be infected cases. There may even be critically ill cases arising from the returns and that would add a lot of pressure to our public hospital system. You may still remember there was one flight recently, on one single flight, we had over 20 infected cases upon arrival; and being a humane government, we had to look after those cases. I need to transport those cases either into hospitals or into isolation facilities. Hong Kong is already under extreme stress right now. I can't even fulfil the pledge to my people to send them health kits and to arrange for them to go into isolation, so I have to protect my health colleagues, especially those in the frontline. At this moment, it is not the time to add more pressure to their work. But I can tell you that we have plans – after controlling this fifth wave and preferably having the Compulsory Universal Testing that will enable us to eliminate any remaining infections in society, we will certainly have plans or a pathway to open up Hong Kong again for our own people and for

international travel.

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