Remarks by Minister Lawrence Wong, Co-chair of the Multi-Ministry Taskforce on COVID-19, at Press Conference on COVID-19 at National Press Centre on 21 April 2020

Good afternoon. We are already seeing some positive results but we cannot be complacent, and this is the time now to continue to hunker down and give this a further push.

First, we call on everyone to do their part to minimise movement. Remember, the virus spreads through people – through our contact with others, and when we go out and touch surfaces, and then our hands touch our faces. We can take precautions like safe distancing and wearing of masks. But the best way to beat the virus is to stay home. So if you need to go out – buy food, buy groceries – go out alone. Do not turn this into an occasion for a family outing. And, if you need to go out and exercise, exercise alone and in your own neighbourhood. Do not travel out to exercise. We call on everyone to do this because it is the best way to protect yourselves and your family members.

Second, we will continue with our efforts to control people movement in popular areas like wet markets and supermarkets. In these areas, we will impose entry restrictions. For example, in certain wet markets, we will only permit entry on alternate days, and we will do this with a system based on your NRIC or your FIN number. Depending on the last digit of your NRIC or FIN number, you will only be permitted entry on odd or even days. That is one example of a localised entry restriction that we will start with wet markets, and we will do this also in other popular areas like supermarkets in order to thin out the crowds and reduce transmission risks in these areas. [Afternote: The entry restrictions currently apply to 4 wet markets as announced in the press releases by MOH and NEA. Other wet markets, as well as supermarkets, which experience crowding, may also introduce similar access restrictions. The entry restrictions are also based on even and odd dates of the month, as announced in NEA’s press release.]

Third, we will close more workplaces and also tighten the list of essential services that are permitted. I mentioned this last week, and we are now ready to make this move. This is important because when we analysed the local infected cases that occurred after the circuit breaker, many of them have been working as part of essential services or have family members who are working; because, these are the people who are still out and about. We do need our essential workers. We appreciate their contributions, but we have to reduce the numbers who are working. That’s why we will make a move to cut back the workforce who still have to commute daily, from the current 20% to 15%. We will do this by making cuts across all sectors of the economy, but also in businesses that are consumer-facing including in F&B and other services. This will mean that all of us may face some degradation of services or we may not be able to access F&B or certain services that we have become accustomed to. I hope everyone understands why we need to make this important move.
Overall, we are seeing results from the circuit breaker, but we cannot let up now. We have to make this strong push to decisively break the transmission chain. The measures that we’ve just announced will be in place till 4 May. Beyond that, we will continue with the circuit breaker for another four weeks to 1 June. Depending on how the situation evolves, we will adjust the measures. If there are clear improvements in our community transmission numbers - for example, if we see community numbers coming down to single digits - then we can consider gradually easing some of these measures.

We’ve said from the outset that this is a prolonged fight. We thank all Singaporeans and all residents of Singapore who have risen to the occasion and done their part through this circuit breaker period. Let us all continue to go all out to stamp out the virus and overcome this together.

Let me just say a few words in Mandarin.

病毒阻断措施实行至今已经两个星期，我们已经开始看到一些成效。我们须要继续努力，再加一把劲。首先，大家必须再减少活动，留在家里，因为这是阻断病毒传播的最佳办法。如果你需要购买食物或日常用品，自己一个人出门就好，不需要全家一起出门。如果你需要运动，也自己一个人就好，而且应该在自己居住的邻里范围内运动。

我们会继续针对多人聚集的地方进行管制，像是湿巴刹和超级市场。这些地方将会有人流管制。如果你需要上巴刹和超级市场，最好是选择星期一到星期五，人比较少的时候。

另外，我们也进一步减少必要服务的种类，继续减少出门工作的人数。我们非常感谢必要服务领域员工在这段期间的贡献。我们将确保继续开工的员工保持安全距离，以及采取必要的防范措施。

我们虽然开始看到成效，但绝对不能松懈下来，所以我们决定延长病毒阻断措施，直到 6 月 1 日。我们将会持续观察情况，按照事态的发展调整措施。如果病毒传播的情况有明显的好转，我们会考虑放宽某些措施。

要成功对抗病毒，除了站在前线的医护人员，也需要你我的努力。我们希望大家都能遵守阻断措施，让我们早日打赢这场仗。