

REMARKS BY MINISTER LAWRENCE WONG, CO-CHAIR OF THE MULTI-MINISTRY TASKFORCE ON COVID-19, AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE ON COVID-19 AT NATIONAL PRESS CENTRE ON 15 JUNE 2020

We'd earlier said that we will provide an update in the middle of June after assessing the situation in the first two weeks of June through this period of Phase 1. As Minister Gan had shared earlier, we had looked at the situation carefully. The infection is under control throughout this period. Therefore, we are now able to enter into Phase 2 from Friday onwards, basically after 18 June, 2359 hours. From this Friday onwards, we will be in Phase 2.

The way to think about Phase 2 is as follows - unlike Phase 1 where we still had quite a number of restrictions in place. In Phase 1, the default settings were that many things remained closed and we only selectively allowed certain things to resume activities in order to manage the risk. Phase 2 is different. (For) Phase 2, the default will be most activities will resume and open. Only a small exception will be left to be done later. So, what will open in Phase 2? Essentially, retail businesses may reopen their physical outlets; F&B dine-in will be allowed to resume, subject to liquor sales and consumption ceasing at 2230 hours. We will not allow live music and television and video screenings in F&B outlets at this stage – so, the F&B dine-in is permitted in groups of five. You go and eat, but don't linger around too much, and no music and no video or TV screening because we do not want the noise around that environment causing people to speak more loudly than they need to, spreading droplets while they eat or to linger around for longer than necessary.

Besides this, retail shopping malls will be opened as well, subject to capacity limits. Personal health and wellness, (and) home-based services will be allowed to resume. Registered clubs and societies can operate at their registered premises. Tuition (and) private enrichment classes can resume, with the exception of singing or voice training classes at this time. Again, because it is a higher risk activity, so we are not allowing the classes that involve singing or voice training. All other healthcare services including eldercare services in the community, individual health screening (and) aesthetic services will resume. Face-to-face visitations at residential facilities for the elderly will also resume with precautionary measures in place. Sports, parks, (and) public facilities will be open. This include playgrounds, beaches, lawns and fields, swimming complexes, sports halls, gyms, fitness studios (and) function rooms. This will apply not only to public facilities, but similar facilities in private settings such as condominiums and country clubs.

We will put out the full list of businesses that are allowed to operate on the MTI website. Businesses who are in this list will not need to apply for an exemption, with effect from the effective date. Essentially, the list will cover quite a wide range and so we expect the vast majority of businesses will be able to reopen; but with the key condition that safe distancing measures must be in place. We tried to simplify this as much as possible. We said that individuals must maintain a safe distance of 1 metre and each time there is a group of people coming out at the same time, it must not be more than 5 persons. So, it is a one metre, five persons rule.

Other than that, many of these businesses will be allowed to reopen. There will be some exceptions, as I have described. We have tried to keep the exceptions list small, but there will be a small number of activities that will take a bit more time, that will not be able to restart immediately at the beginning of Phase 2.

These are activities which we have highlighted before – they are activities involving large numbers of people that are likely to come into close contact, often in enclosed spaces of a prolonged period of time. And our experience in Singapore, and also overseas experience,

have shown that such settings are of higher risk and they could result in large clusters forming. So these are your super-spreader events, if you will.

The activities and settings include religious congregations, large venues like libraries, museums, large-scale events and venues including conferences, exhibitions, concerts, trade fairs, as well as entertainment venues like bars, nightclubs, karaoke outlets, cinemas, theatres, as well as indoor and outdoor attractions. So these will take a bit more time.

Government agencies are continuing to engage the relevant businesses and organisations on the safe management measures that would be needed for these specific activities and settings. And subject to these safe management precautions and requirements being put in place, at the later date, we will be able to allow these to resume progressively over time – but not at the start of Phase 2, because we still need time to engage all of these businesses and organisations and ensure that the appropriate measures are put in place.

There are also specific rules that we are putting in place for specific settings and events. For example, for weddings, we are allowing for added flexibility where wedding solemnisations at home or at the ROM or ROMM can take place with up to 10 persons, excluding the solemniser. And if it is at other venues, they may take place with up to 20 persons. For wakes and funerals, we are allowing up to 20 persons to be present at any one time.

These are the guidelines for the start of Phase 2. It will allow many more activities to resume, and once again, as my colleagues Minister Gan and Professor Mak have highlighted, I want to appeal to all Singaporeans to be responsible in undertaking the activities that are permitted under Phase 2. Do not treat Phase 2 as a signal that we can all relax, we can all let our guards down, and we can now go out and do all our favourite activities. I think if we were to take that kind of mindset and attitude, it will be very easy for Phase 2 to end up with a surge in cases and, potentially down the road, the likelihood of having to re-introduce restrictions – which I don't think anyone of us would like to see.

But if we are responsible in upholding all the precautions and safe distancing measures that are required of us in Phase 2 - if we use the space and the activities that we now can undertake, if we take that responsibly, by all means go out, but limit the number of contacts we have to a small group, and take all the necessary measures – be disciplined, be vigilant. Then Phase 2 will allow us to resume some level of normalcy in our daily lives while continuing to keep COVID-19 at bay and continue to control the infection. So that is something that we want to achieve. The Government cannot do this alone through rules or restrictions. All of us must do our part and work together to move towards Phase 2, in a sustained and safe manner.

Finally before I close, I thought I should also highlight that even as we are reopening our economy and society, we are also taking steps to reopen travel. We've highlighted before that we are establishing green lanes with several countries - we've established with China, and we are continuing our negotiations and discussions with other countries so as to broaden these green lane arrangements.

In addition, as we do this, we expect more travellers coming back to Singapore. We will now put in place a new requirement to test all incoming travellers, on top of the Stay-Home Notice (SHN) requirement that is already in place. So all new incoming travellers from 17 June 2359, with effect from that time – all will be subject to tests towards the end of their SHN. The specific requirements, how they will be notified – we will put out these details in due course. But the key is we will be testing all of them.

In addition, because we are continuing to monitor the situation in different countries, the risk of importation from abroad varies from country to country because countries and regions are

at various stages of putting in place effective systems to control the infection. So we will also adjust our border measures to take into account these differences in risk.

In particular for travellers entering Singapore from specific countries and regions, specifically Australia, Brunei, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mainland China, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam. For travellers entering Singapore from 17 June 2359, and have remained in these places that I have just cited in the last consecutive 14 days prior to their entry into Singapore, we will allow them to serve their Stay-Home Notice at their place of residence instead of a dedicated facility. So it is only for this group, if they are coming back from these specific areas, then the SHN can be served at a place of residence rather than a dedicated facility.

All of them, whether serving SHN at home or in a dedicated facility – all incoming travellers will still be subject to tests. With the arrangements that we are putting in place, we do expect to have the ability now to allow more Long-Term Pass Holders overseas to return to Singapore. We have all this while been allowing them to come back, but we regulate the flow of returnees coming back. Because we now have more capacity for testing, for SHN facilities, including the possibility that some may now serve their SHN at home, we are now able to facilitate the re-entry of more Long-Term Pass Holders in the coming weeks, and we will do so particularly for those with roots to Singapore, or have exigent circumstances.

Finally, we will make one other change on our border measures and travel arrangements. Up to now, the cost of tests and the cost of SHN facilities have been borne by the Government. But looking ahead as we reopen for more travel, we will want to move to a more sustainable position. And again for all inbound and outbound travellers who enter Singapore from 17 June 2359, and leave Singapore from 17 June 2359, they will be required to pay for their COVID-19 test. In addition, for those who have to serve their SHN in a dedicated facility, if you are not a Singaporean or Permanent Resident, then you will have to pay for the full cost of the SHN facility as well. So those are the changes we will be making on the travel front, and in terms of our border measures. Thank you.