

**Remarks by Minister Lawrence Wong, Co-chair of the Multi-Ministry Taskforce on COVID-19, at Press Conference at National Press Centre on 18 March 2020**

Good evening everyone.

A rise in the number of infected cases today and in recent days is a concern for all of us in the Taskforce, and I am sure it is also a big concern for many Singaporeans. As you have heard, most of these cases are imported ones and the majority are Singaporeans and residents coming back from overseas. We have said this before – fortunately, we have been able to pick them up early, some even right at the airport, some shortly after they come home and see a doctor, and we know that these cases have not gone on to spread to other people. But we cannot afford to take further risks. The numbers of these imported cases are here to rise.

That is why we are imposing additional border controls and travel restrictions today. For outgoing travellers, we are raising the advisory from deferring non-essential travel to deferring all travel.

For incoming travellers, we have introduced a tiered system of controls recently and at the highest risk level, we have countries like China, Republic of Korea, Italy, France, Germany and Spain where we already disallow short-term visitors from these countries. So that remains at the highest risk.

At the next tier, we have countries like the UK, Switzerland, Japan and ASEAN countries, and all visitors with recent travel history in these countries have to serve a 14-day self-isolation period here in Singapore – a Stay-Home Notice (SHN) in Singapore.

We will now broaden this requirement to all other countries in the world, which means that a Singaporean coming back from anywhere in the world, effectively, will have to serve a full 14-day self-isolation period.

Even with these controls, we have to be mentally prepared for the number of imported cases to continue rising in the coming days. That is simply because we already know that there are more Singaporeans wanting to come back to Singapore. At this time, there are students in Europe; in the US, there are people working overseas, who are all wanting to come back, particularly during this critical period. And we have to expect, given the way the virus is transmitting overseas, that some of the returning Singaporeans will also be infected.

With all these measures in place, we have to still be mentally prepared that in the coming days, the number of cases will still go up. But at least with the new measures, we can ensure that all arrivals into Singapore will be required to self-isolate for a full 14 days and we will enforce this requirement strictly. Even if there are more cases amongst the returnees, we can isolate them, treat them and minimise the risks of the virus transmitting more broadly to other Singaporeans. That is our key objective.

With these measures, we hope we can limit the number of new imported cases and continue to slow down the spread of the virus in Singapore.

Let me just say a few words in Mandarin.

新冠病毒在全球扩散的速度有加快的趋势。我国患病的人数也正在增加，他们多数是在国外被感染的新加坡公民和居民。因此，我们决定加强措施来防止病毒的扩散。

首先，我们呼吁国人不要出游。我们之前已经鼓励国人把不重要的出行取消。现在，我们呼吁大家暂时不要出国。

另外，我们之前已经针对入境旅客实行一系列的措施。来自中国、伊朗、意大利、法国、德国、西班牙以及韩国的旅客，不准入境或在新加坡过境。这项措施不变。

另外，过去曾经到过瑞士、英国、日本以及亚细安国家的国人、居民以及旅客，在入境后，必须遵守十四天的居家通知。他们必须留在家中、旅店自我隔离。我们现在把这项要求扩大到其他所有国家地区。不管你从哪里回来，都必须遵守这项要求。

这些新措施非常严格，会对国人的生活造成影响。但我们希望国人能够理解这些措施的目的是要减低感染，保护国人。