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Ongoing Topics

The Second Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Emergency Response Package (Key Points)

March 10, 2020

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[Provisional Translation]

- The government will exert every effort to prevent the spread of infection and address the immediate issues appropriately (fiscal measures: approximately 400 billion yen; financial measures: 1.6 trillion yen total).
- It will continue to closely monitor regional and global economic trends along with the epidemiological situation and take necessary measures without hesitation.

(1) Preventing COVID-19 from spreading and developing medical treatment structures

Measures to prevent the spread of infections

It is critical that a cluster does not create another cluster in order to contain the outbreak as early as possible. We will slow down the increase of patients as much as possible by preventing infections from spreading.

- Dispatch experts on counter-cluster measures to local governments
- Assist purchases of disinfectants by nursing homes, facilities for the disabled, nursery schools, among other facilities

Comprehensive mask-related measures on both demand and supply sides

In view of the current shortage of masks, we will take comprehensive measures on both demand and supply sides.

- Prohibit resale of masks in order to prevent purchases of masks for the purpose of reselling them at high prices online, and through other means.
- Make a purchase of 20 million fabric masks at once by the government and swiftly distribute them to nursing homes and other facilities
- Make a purchase of 15 million surgical masks at once by the government and distribute them to medical institutions in need with priority
- Provide further support to mask manufacturers for increasing production

Enhancing PCR screening system

The government will strengthen the system so as to let all patients take PCR tests when physicians deem it necessary for diagnosis at outpatient facilities for Japanese returnees and potential contacts and other facilities.

- Support the installment of PCR screening equipment in the private sector, etc., to further increase screening capacity (up to around 7,000 tests per day)
- Apply medical insurance to PCR tests (eligible patients will continue not to incur out-of-pocket expenses as publicly funded)

Enhancing medical treatment systems and accelerating development of cures

- Along with preventing the spread of infections, the government will strengthen medical treatment structures focusing on the treatment of the severely ill to prepare for the significant increase of patients. Secure more than 5,000 hospital beds for emergencies, and provide supports for installation of equipment such as respirators (half of the costs to be funded by the government)

- Accelerate the development of cures through the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) and other treatments

Responses for people with symptoms

To ensure the smooth disbursement of injury and sickness allowances under the health insurance system, the government will inform the public with the process of application as well as its eligibility including cases where people who have self-reported symptoms, such as fever, and recuperate at home.

Strengthening public communication

The government will provide key information through the website of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Government Public Relations, and other means to various stakeholders including the public companies, and local governments. Such key information includes the status of the COVID-19 outbreak, ways to prevent infection such as washing hands, typical clinical data, the system for medical consultations and testing, medical facilities providing care, among others.

(2) Responses for issues arising from temporary school closures

Support for parents' work leaves

The government will create an environment where parents can take leave without difficulties, by supporting parents who are forced to take leave due to the temporary school closures and business operators which have such employees.

- Establish a new subsidy system that covers employees, no matter permanent or non-permanent (subsidy rate: 10/10, up to 8,330 yen a day)
- Support self-employed people performing subcontract work (4,100 yen a day for those who meet certain eligibility criteria)

Special loans from emergency small funds for individuals

The government will make an exception in the living and welfare fund loan program, for households facing income decline due to the impacts of COVID-19.

- Establish Special Loans from Emergency Small Funds (emergency small loan: incremental from 100,000 yen to 200,000 yen, with no interest and with possible exemption)

Enhancing after-school club programs, et al.

With regard to securing a place for children to go, the government will provide necessary support to ensure the safety of children, while sufficiently minimizing the economic burdens of parents.

- Bear the additional costs associated with opening after-school clubs from the morning at government expense (subsidy rate: 10/10)
- Cover the reduction and exemption of user fees for family support center services at the government expense (subsidy rate: 10/10)
- Increase the discount voucher limit for the private-sector-led baby-sitter user support services (increase from 24 vouchers a month to 120 vouchers)

Measures related to suspension of school lunches

With regard to the suspension of school lunches, the government aims to ensure that parents do not have to pay for school meal fees from March 2, 2020 through spring break.

- Call for refunds of school meal fees to parents, and support bearing associated costs
- Provide support tailored to stakeholders such as school meal providers, food suppliers, and dairy farmers

Promoting telework

Due to the recent temporary school closures, it is expected that opportunities for parents to work at home will increase. Taking this opportunity of disease control, including the perspective of the prevention of the spread of infections, the government will strongly promote teleworking so that people can work even during disease control, and make a new work-style model take root.

(3) Responses for shrinking business activities and employment

Expanding special measures on the Employment Adjustment Subsidies

- Due to the impacts of COVID-19, some businesses are forced to curtail their operations in response to the slow-down of the flow of people and goods. The government will significantly expand special measures on the Employment Adjustment Subsidies so as to protect employment and secure the stability of the people's lives even in such a situation. Expand the scope of the special measures to all business owners, clarify eligibility criteria (such as simultaneous closure), and apply retroactively back to January, 2020.
- Increase the subsidy rate for certain areas (SMEs: increase from 2/3 to 4/5; large enterprises: from 1/2 to 2/3)

Robust liquidity supports

In order to overcome the impacts on local economies, including those from self-restraint from holding events, and bring businesses back on a growth track after the disease is under control, the government will implement financial measures totaling 1.6 trillion yen from the Japan Finance Corporation and other institutions, primarily focusing on micro, small and medium-sized business operators.

- Establish a COVID-19 special loan program (on the scale of 500 billion yen) and reduce the interest rate, as well as provide real interest-free, unsecured financing support to micro, small and medium-sized business operators and others
- Applying safety net guarantee system No. 4 (100%) and No. 5 (80%) of credit guarantee corporations, as well as crisis-related guarantees (100%)
- Support financing and reorganization of domestic supply chains through operations to facilitate crisis response by the Development Bank of Japan (DBJ), and the Shoko Chukin Bank (on the scale of 204 billion yen)
- Call for private financial institutions to actively provide new loans and change terms for existing debt

Responses for the damages to supply chains

Taking into consideration the burdens on micro, small-, and medium-sized business operators, the government will enable expedited assistance, regarding priority supports on capital investments to respond to the damages, including those on supply chains, and for business owners who work to cultivate new sales channels

- Make use of the Growth Investment Facility and other measures of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) (on the scale of up to 500 billion yen)
- Support reorganization of domestic supply chains through the DBJ, etc (same measure as previous item)

Measures for the tourism industry

The prevention of the spread of infections is the premise of the recovery of tourism demand. The government will strongly support the tourism industry through the Employment Adjustment Subsidy and liquidity supports for the time being. At the same time, regarding the period in which the government is working on prevention as a forward-looking "run-up" period, the government will develop a foundation to prepare for a turnaround in the future, identifying this infection control period.

- Provide supports in various fields such as diversification of attractions, including the development of attractive tourism content and multilingual signs.
- Consider a post-COVID-19 campaign through the collaboration of the public and private sectors

Strengthening comprehensive supports through promoting the use of the self-reliance support system for people in need

The government encourages the local governments to provide comprehensive supports tailored to people in need, including those who had to leave their jobs or have decreased incomes due to the impacts of COVID-19.

(4) Emergency measures that adapt to situational changes

Preparing for a new bill

In order to protect the lives and health of Japanese people and minimize the impacts on people's lives and the economy, the government has decided to amend the Act on Special Measures for Pandemic Influenza and New Infectious Diseases Preparedness and

Response to tentatively include COVID-19 into its scope and submit a relevant bill to the Diet (Cabinet Decision of March 10, 2020).

Responsive border control measures

From the perspective of preventing a large influx of infected persons to Japan, the government continues to implement existing border control measures, including the existing restrictions over entry and travel advisories. - Swift and flexible responses, including disembarkation refusal, visa restrictions, strengthening quarantine measures, and dissemination of information on disease risks

Temporary measures related to administrative procedures and public procurement

Taking into consideration the need to prevent the spread of infections, the government will make flexible responses in administration procedures, public procurement, and other processes.

- Extension of tax return deadline to April 16, 2020, temporary measures related to driver's license renewal
- Actively publicize grace system for national taxes and social insurance premiums and take other swift and flexible responses
- Take flexible responses for public construction works (such as, extension of construction period) and carry-overs

Strengthening international cooperation

- The government will proactively contribute to global efforts on disease control, for developing countries affected by the spread of COVID-19. Contribution to emergency assistance provided by WHO and other organizations

Fiscal supports for local government efforts

The government has decided to disburse special allocation tax in cases where local governments need to bear the cost when implementing the first emergency response package. In addition, it will respond accordingly so as not to hinder the fiscal management of local governments with respect to burdens that local governments need to bear for the implementation of this response package.

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