

SCS on Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme and oath-taking by civil servants (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, at a media session at the Central Government Offices today (January 18):

Reporter: Can I ask why are the four old hotels replaced with four new ones? Is it because their range is between like rather high prices? And secondly, can I also follow up on the civil servants' declaration of allegiance? Can you clarify if civil servants can still take part in peaceful, legal protests? Because you said they can express their views on government policies as citizens but any such expression in public could lead to conflict with their civil servant identity. Thank you.

Secretary for the Civil Service: As regards the question concerning the designated hotels, there will be an addition of four hotels to the second round of the Designated Hotel Scheme. Basically in this second round, we have increased the number of hotels that charge at the low-end price, meaning less than a thousand dollars, specifically less than five hundred dollars a night. As regards the four hotels that have decided to withdraw from the Scheme, it is because of their own considerations, commercial reasons and all that. I would not comment on that. For the second round Designated Hotel Scheme, we now have over 80 per cent, actually is 83.5 per cent, of the total number of hotel rooms that would charge below a thousand dollars a night.

In response to the question about civil servants participating in peaceful protests, as I said just now, the right of freedom of expression, the freedom of speech and all that are protected under the Basic Law and the relevant Hong Kong legislation. Civil servants, based on our existing circular, except for a certain category of civil servants coming from certain grades, basically can join peaceful protests or demonstrations to express their views because as an individual, they have such rights. But of course in exercising these, make sure that it is peaceful, it is lawful. Also if they want to express their views or do some acts in public, make sure that there will not be some conflicts between the role as an individual citizen and the role as a civil servant.

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