

Transcript of remarks by Acting CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (January 22):

Reporter: Now the appeal of Frankly Chu in the police abuse case during Occupy has been rejected by the highest court, it's possible to comment on the case. So would the Police and Government offer criticism of Mr Chu, apologise and explain what will be done to prevent future cases of police abuse?

Acting Chief Executive: We must respect the decision of the Court of Final Appeal. That's very important – rule of law in Hong Kong. I've nothing further to add on that point. OK?

Reporter: But Mr Cheung, is the procedure really simple enough though, because the public was confused and there aren't enough forms, so what is the Government going to do to improve the situation looking forward? About another topic on CSSA change, is Mrs Carrie Lam not respecting the pan-dems when she simply cannot make time to meet them about change? Third question, if using the bypass, the new bypass, is actually sometimes slower than using the old route and the Transport Department is actually encouraging drivers heading west to use the old route instead, is the bypass really useful then?

Acting Chief Executive: First of all, the Caring and Sharing Scheme – \$4,000 is involved. We are talking about striking a balance between user-friendliness on the one hand and accountability, particularly when public money is concerned, on the other. To strike a fine balance, we must, as I remind my colleagues always, we must do our very, very best to make it really user-friendly and maximise the scope for user-friendliness. That's why we will continue to be flexible in handling applications. What we require applicants to provide in their application is basically essential data only. We certainly would not bother or create inconvenience to the applicants, first of all.

The second question is about the new scheme requiring those aged between 60 and 64 to work, to join the work programme (Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged), rather than relying on Old Age Allowance under CSSA. Our intention is clear. We want to unleash the potential of the labour force, particularly at a time when Hong Kong is facing acute shortage of manpower. First of all, we face an ageing population. In the job-seeking process, we'll provide full support, we'll provide them with an employment support (Employment Support Supplement), a supplement amount, the total payment in fact aligns that of the Old Age Allowance Standard Rate. So we are talking about a level playing field here. On top of it, they are also entitled to rental allowance plus free medical services. Apart from these,

they also enjoy extra income by working. They can actually accumulate income up to \$2,500 per month (maximum "disregarded earnings") without any deduction. So, all these are really positive incentives to promote employment in Hong Kong. And I really wish that the pan-democrats will respond positively to my invitation to meet this Thursday afternoon. My invitation is really very sincere. We want a face-to-face dialogue, iron out all misunderstanding so that we can take the matter forward.

Finally, on the Central-Wan Chai Bypass congestion on the first day, I would use the word "teething problems". Things have really been improving. In fact, overnight, Transport Department colleagues had done their very best to erect directional signboards and also display more information spontaneously on the various digital screens at very important vantage points to facilitate motorists. I am sure that given time, and also with the completion of the access road in a month's time, the link road between Rumsey Street flyover and the Bypass itself, the situation will be further improved. Okay? Thank you.

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