

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session after visiting Tsuen Wan (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session after visiting Tsuen Wan today (September 15):

Reporter: A research report yesterday discovered a lot of these sea-front mansions have unauthorised occupation of government land. There's a perception that the Government is allowing wealthy people to keep doing this under your nose. Do you consider this risk-based approach not effective and will you start a special work to inspect all these estates named in that report?

Chief Executive: First of all, the Government is serious about the problem of illegal structure. But we have to face the reality that there are at least 40 000-odd private buildings. Each building, of course, is multi-storey. If you look at the number of households, then you are talking about a very big number. Then pragmatically, we have to think of a way to address the problem. We are adopting the policy of taking action according to the risk. Risk means safety risk. For illegal structures that we assess to have a safety risk, that may cause problems to society, then of course, they will be the ones we will deal with. I must emphasise that ensuring one's house has no illegal structure is the responsibility of the house owner. That must be made very clear. The law specifically requires that anybody who has an illegal structure and when they are told, they should restore it. Also, if it has a safety risk, then it has to be rectified immediately. If it is not done quickly, then the Government will, of course, come in to do it, but then we'll ask the person to of course shoulder the costs as well as taking legal action as the case requires. That's the policy.

In regard to Redhill Peninsula, I think the Secretary for Development has already indicated that they will be doing an inspection of the area and also take action again to the risks they identified, i.e. if there are slopes or there are illegal structures that cause safety risks, then they will be dealt with immediately. If the person cannot rectify immediately, we will rectify immediately for the sake of safety. But we have to also be pragmatic as to how we approach this problem. But I can assure you that for those identified problems, we will take all possible means to ensure that safety is first of all protected, and then the person concerned will face the legal consequences.

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