

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council (ExCo) meeting today (May 17):

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs Lam. First, have you reached a consent with Mr John Lee (the sixth-term Chief Executive-elect (CE-elect)) on the details of the restructuring plan? Is there a possibility that some Principal Officials will have to stay on for some time in the next term because time is pressing for the CE-elect to form his own team? Second, will the Government proceed with the third phase of Vaccine Pass when around a million people eligible for a third shot still haven't taken their third shot? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I'll answer the second question first because I have just referred to the Government's commitment to the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Vaccination remains the most effective way to prevent serious illnesses arising from COVID-19 infection. If we could keep this situation, we will not be overburdening Hong Kong public hospitals, and that has always been one of the primary objectives of our anti-epidemic work in Hong Kong. With that objective in mind, we will continue to implement what we have announced for a very long time. We are not suddenly requiring Hong Kong people to take the third dose before they could enter restaurants, gyms or other venues. We have been telling people and announcing well in advance the three-dose requirement under the Vaccine Pass. I can confirm and reaffirm here that that remains our plan. From May 31, people will have to have proof of having taken three doses before they can enter the premises unless they have medical reasons or they are recovered patients – then there will be some special arrangements.

On the first question, let me put it in a very, very absolute way. There is no question of myself and the Chief Executive-elect reaching a consensus or, as you put it, a consent. There is nothing that the CE-elect needs from me in terms of consent or approval. My role is to facilitate the next-term Chief Executive to have the best and optimal government structure to enable him to discharge what he has promised the people of Hong Kong. I said this well before the election. I announced in my Policy Address last year that this proposal on restructuring was not done for myself, it's for the government. Based on my experience, especially with experience as the Chief Executive, I thought something need to be changed in terms of the government structure, so I offered some initial ideas in my October 2021 Policy Address. Thereafter, we talked to people, we received recommendations from the community and the Legislative Council. That has given rise to a set of very detailed proposals, which I announced on January 12, 2022, that is, to increase the number of policy bureaux from 13 to 15, and so on. Since then, we have received broad support for the set of proposals. This then forms the basis for the Chief Executive-elect to consider. If he felt that it was not

the right approach, he could throw it away and start afresh. But on this occasion, Mr John Lee felt that he agreed with the entire package, so what we are putting to the ExCo this morning will include the full components of government restructuring that I announced in January this year.

But I can also tell you that there will be other proposals. It will not be just the set of proposals put forward by the current-term Government. This is only natural because each Chief Executive will have his own governing style. Having regard to the aspirations of the people and the priorities that he has set for the next five years, it is only natural for him to come up with more ideas on how to restructure the government.

My job is to facilitate the approval for a new government structure. I'm not involved in identifying the candidates to fill the various positions in the political team. Whether that could be done in time, I don't know – you have to ask the Chief Executive-elect. It will be very unusual to invite the existing politically appointed officials just to fill the gap and stay on for a few months because they are not civil servants, their term is entirely my term, which is a five-year term. I hope that would not be the situation and I have every confidence that John should be able to find all the right people to fill the various positions.

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