

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (April 30):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Lee. Firstly, with regards to the plastic ban policy, has the Environment and Ecology Bureau failed in policy explanation given the confusion over the plastic ban on, for instance, display of sushi at supermarkets and also confusion over dine-in at some stores? And also is your Government still confident in pushing forward with the waste charging scheme in August, given the situation we have seen with the plastic ban so far? And the second question, with regards to the upcoming Golden Week as well, is the Government worried in particular about the weather issue affecting its highlight firework event for the city on the first day of the Golden Week holiday? And why isn't there a sort of special border arrangement as seen in previous holidays during this Golden Week holiday? Is there any particular reason for it and what sort of measures would the Government take to ensure that the city can handle the tourists coming into the city during this holiday period? Thank you.

Chief Executive: In regard to waste charging, in particular, the use of plastic bags to do graded charging, it is already in the law. The Government is seriously looking into ways to implement it. That is why we have introduced this drill to 14 targeted premises to see how it is being implemented, what problems are being encountered, and what are the response and opinions of the people who are going through the drill. To me, a policy that affects each and every citizen of our almost 7.5-million population is a serious matter that needs to be examined so that while we want to ensure the environment is well protected, we also want to proceed steadily so that people will be able to change their behaviour in a steady manner. Also very important is, because it's affecting everybody, how people think and feel about it. So I have asked the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration to oversee this drill to listen to their views, and we will examine the feedback to decide how we will proceed. In regard to plastic bags, the Environment and Ecology Bureau has indicated the stock is quite enough for its present use, so they have made arrangements to deal with that matter. We will, as soon as possible, review the overall implementation details in the drill and also examine the views and opinions expressed by the people involved and come to a decision. When we come to that stage, we will inform the public as soon as possible.

As regards our preparation for the Golden Week, we have been fully geared. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has on more than one occasion organised interdepartmental meetings to ensure that full preparation has been made in different areas. These include ensuring that at the boundary control points, including the airport, there will be sufficient manpower and special

arrangements so as to ensure that the crossing at the boundary control points will be smooth, orderly, and will be handled as quickly as possible. We will be making special transportation arrangements; in some areas we'll be increasing the supply of public transport by some 40 per cent. The command centre will be in operation 24 hours so as to address different issues that may come out. There will also be a special arrangement for some pickup locations for cross-boundary transportation, and on some particular days, the last train that will go to Lo Wu will also be extended. The announcement of all these measures have been made very clearly.

And of course we want the experience to be a pleasant one, so we are very glad that those who are involved in the service industries are all geared up to ensure that they will provide special services to ensure that they will make good use of the opportunity, and also ensure that there will be a good experience. The Tourism Commission, together with the relevant bodies, will also be turning out on those days to ensure that things will be worked out in an orderly and smoothly manner.

We have made a number of promotion activities such as the pyrotechnic display. Of course we want to do the best to ensure that it will be most welcome and enjoyed by everybody, tourists and Hong Kong people. We will do our best. But, of course, weather is always unpredictable. We will inform the public about the decision we make as soon as possible, as circumstances permit. But there are a wide range of activities that have been arranged to welcome visitors during the Golden Week, and a lot of them will proceed regardless of weather conditions. Of course, we will do our best to ensure that visitors will have a good experience.

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