

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 (June 18):

Reporter: Good morning Mr Lee. So, the first question will be, would there be any updates on the progress of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) after Premier Li Qiang spoke of his support for Hong Kong during this visit in Australia and New Zealand? And secondly, on yesterday's runway accident, how do you find the handling of it? And do you think there's any room for improvement? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Regarding RCEP, we are very keen on joining it because we think we can contribute to the overall good of RCEP. We also think Hong Kong can benefit from it because I think 70 per cent of the Hong Kong's merchandise trade has been with RCEP countries. We are very pleased to note that 10 ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries have indicated support for Hong Kong to join RCEP. I also know that RCEP members are in the process of discussing the accession procedure for new members. It is being discussed and it hasn't been concluded. But we are ready to take part at any time when it is considered that we can help the discussion or actually join in the process of accession. Of course, Hong Kong Government will continue our effort to talk to other RCEP members to gain their support for our accession to RCEP. I think Hong Kong's accession will do a lot of good to RCEP because Hong Kong is a very free economy. We have strengths in different areas, including being a financial centre, our development in I&T (innovation and technology), and that Hong Kong is a gateway to Mainland cities. So Hong Kong, as an international city, being both connected to the international world, as well as to cities in the Mainland, we have a lot to offer. Our professional services are also first-class, of international standard, so they will be helping member countries of RCEP to develop and prosper.

As regards the incident yesterday about the closure of the North Runway of the airport; it is an incident that involved a freighter, the tyre of which had burst and also the hydraulic system had failed. So the procedure is to ensure that it will be safely removed from the runway. That means offloading the cargo there. I note that the action taken was in accordance with the emergency plan that is designed for such an incident. And I have also noted that there are a series of measures to ensure it was handled properly including public announcements, special public transportation, special flight arrangement and also increasing manpower to ensure that different needs were addressed. We have asked for reports to be submitted and the airline concerned will submit reports to both the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AA) and the Civil Aviation Department. The Transport and Logistics Bureau, of course, will take an active role in scrutinising the report. I am a believer that for any matter, there's always room for improvement. I am

glad that the incident was handled safely; I think that is the most important principle in any emergency incident. That has the No. 1 priority. We will scrutinise the report and then see whether any extra action can be taken by the airline, the AA and other parties concerned.

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