

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (June 9):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, yesterday Zhang Xiaoming talked about national security, he cited what Deng Xiaoping said in the 1980s and the 90s, but I noticed that in 1990s Deng Xiaoping when he met Hong Kong tycoon, he said Beijing promised that the original way of life in Hong Kong would remain unchanged for 50 years and after 50 years there will be no reason to change it. But yesterday Zhang Xiaoming said Hong Kong people need to, Hong Kong would need to provide the NPC with a report in order to win a new mandate from it, to extend the 2047 promise. He also said Hong Kong's problems are political, not economic. Is that a major shift of Beijing's governing policy on Hong Kong? My second question is Mr Zhang also said that last month you submitted a proposal to Beijing on ways to strengthen Hong Kong's role as an international financial centre. So can you tell us what are some of the key recommendations that you made? And with this national security legislation and with Beijing's latest plan to develop Hainan Province, do you think that your plans would really achieve its goals? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. I can say very categorically that there is absolutely no change in the policy of the Central Authorities towards the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region because that policy is enshrined through the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and repeatedly stressed by the leaders, and that is the successful, comprehensive and accurate implementation of "One Country, Two Systems". And national security should be very much a core part of that comprehensive and accurate implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" because every country needs national security in order to safeguard the interests of the country. There is no deviation or shift in the policy. If there is any deviation or breach, that is our "incapacity or inefficiency in enacting local legislation on our own to safeguard national security". After 23 years when that sort of arrangement was being put in place through Article 23, but the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region – and by the way it's not just the executive, it's also the legislative, because enacting legislation requires the approval of the Legislative Council – could not achieve that by ourselves, then of course in absolute compliance with the principle "One Country, Two Systems", the Central Authorities could not turn a blind eye and have to act. What we have seen on May 28, the Decision passed by the National People's Congress, is to implement that very important measure.

The second question about Hong Kong's financial services, since taking office as the Chief Executive, I have taken a very deep interest and personal

involvement in promoting Hong Kong's financial services because I feel very strongly that this is the most valuable industry in Hong Kong, now accounting almost for one-fifth of our Gross Domestic Product. This is also one area which is important not only to Hong Kong but also to the country because we are not just Hong Kong's financial centre or PRC's financial centre, we are an international financial centre. From time to time, I have been putting forward proposals on how we could enhance and promote Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre in consultation with the Financial Secretary and the Financial Leaders Forum chaired by the Financial Secretary, and also ideas put to me by the regulators, that is, the HKMA (Hong Kong Monetary Authority), the Securities and Futures Commission and more recently the Insurance Authority, together with the Hong Kong Exchange. I could not disclose the exact details of my latest proposals to the Central Government, but these proposals will revolve around this plan to make Hong Kong more international, to turn Hong Kong into a more prominent offshore Renminbi centre, to transform Hong Kong really into the hub for the management of private wealth. And by so doing, we should also be promoting greater connectivity between the Hong Kong financial markets and the Mainland financial markets. Over the years we have the Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect, Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect and the Bond Connect. There are other connectivities that we have been talking about, whether we could have an insurance connect, an IPO connect or a private wealth connect. These are the things that we will continue to put forward to the Central Government. To be very honest, like all of you, I heard about this positive response from Vice Premier Han Zheng and the relevant ministries only yesterday when Zhang Xiaoming mentioned about it. I put forward proposals, I'm waiting for a response, but I'm very pleased to hear from Deputy Director Zhang that the Central Government has accorded priority to my proposals and will be giving us a positive response.

Regarding Hainan, coincidentally I just wrote a letter to the Hainan Province Governor yesterday, congratulating Hainan on the promulgation of this plan for Hainan to become a free port (è†±ç”±è²²æ~“æ,~). And I tell the Governor, Shen Xiaoming, that I see a lot of synergy and potential collaboration between the Hainan free port and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area because there are strengths in the Greater Bay Area, there are strengths in the Hainan area, and I don't see that sort of direct competition. We should seize every opportunity of the deepening of reform and opening up of the Mainland economies, whether at the central level or at the provincial level, as opportunities for Hong Kong because I have confidence in Hong Kong that we'll continue to provide the financial support and also the legal services and the other professional services which Hong Kong is very good at to our Mainland counterparts.

Reporter: But why is it Hong Kong people's responsibility to convince Beijing to extend the 50 years promise? Why isn't it the other way around?

Chief Executive: That is not an issue that we need to address now. The immediate issue is to prove that "One Country, Two Systems" works well in Hong Kong, and to prove that Hong Kong people are reasonable and sensible citizens of the People's Republic of China that we could be trusted to

continue to have our own way of life and our own way of system within the whole country.

Reporter: I have three questions. First, the Government said a publicly organised poll on strike action over the national security law has no legal basis, but you have also cited a publicly organised poll collecting signatures in favour of the national security law, so is such public poll illegal and is there a double standard? Second, just now you said the strike action goes against the interests of seven million citizens. Do you speak for the interests of seven million Hongkongers, given that this is the anniversary of an estimated one-million-march against a decision from your administration? And lastly, on journalist Victor Mallet's visa denial, you said in 2018 that it was, "pure speculation" that Beijing interfered, adding that the immigration matters are within Hong Kong's autonomy. Will you now admit you misled Hongkongers after Zhang Xiaoming acknowledged China's hand in the matter yesterday? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Well, first of all, I don't get it, what sort of poll you are referring to, so I really can't respond to that. If you are referring to a government press statement issued the day before yesterday about "referendum", we are definitely against any "referendum". In Chinese, it's "å...-æŠ•". That is not something within Hong Kong's political system or structure.

As far as any strike action amidst the difficulties that Hong Kong is facing, I do not believe that Hong Kong people welcome that sort of strike action when their greatest worry, or the greatest worry of many people, is losing their job and facing difficulties in their daily living.

On the third question, immigration authorities are within the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR). I am having dual responsibility to the Hong Kong people in the Hong Kong SAR, and to the Central People's Government. Where things are in the national interest, I do not need to be instructed or told to do what is right to safeguard the national interest. I hope that makes it very clear.

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