

# Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (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 (October 5):

Reporter: My first question is, the Danish artist behind the Pillar of Shame urged HKU (The University of Hong Kong) to let the statue remain in the campus, saying that the removal of it would be offensive and profane. As the (university's) Chancellor, what's your take on this? Second question, more district councillors have been removed from office but there are still two years before the election. What would the Government do with this vacuum, and could you clarify rumours that the Government would take away the District Councils' power of allocating funds? Third question, how would you respond to reports based on the "Pandora Papers" that accuse C Y Leung of hiding the wealth from the public? Would the Government do anything about this? Thanks.

Chief Executive: Of the three questions, first of all, under the Basic Law, rights and freedoms of individuals are being safeguarded. That's point number one, including artistic freedom and academic freedom. Secondly, this incident happens in the university campus. I would expect the university management to handle it according to their own policy. As the Chancellor of not only the University of Hong Kong but other universities, I do not get myself involved or interfere into the affairs of the universities.

The second question about District Council members, right now we are in the third batch. We still have another batch of serving District Council members who will be invited to take their oaths with the Secretary for Home Affairs being the oath administrator. Our position is that we will act in strict accordance with the Basic Law requirement, the National Security Law requirement and the local legislation, and decide whether a serving District Council member could fulfil the obligations under these legal requirements; if not, they could no longer serve as a District Council member. Once all these have been settled, including the third batch which is now going on and another batch which will shortly be invited to take the oath, then the Government will have an idea of how these 18 District Councils will be constituted. And then of course we have to decide whether they are still functional in a fair and efficient manner. For example, some District Councils will be left with only a couple of District Council members that they could not even have a chairman, no quorum, but at the same time they do have a lot of influence in allocating District Council funds or deciding on which district minor works should be undertaken with public money. We do have a duty to take all these factors into account and then decide on the way forward because, as you rightly pointed out, they still have a term of about two years in the current tenure. But now I'm not in a position to tell you what will happen, except I made it very clear, that under Article 97 of the Basic Law as well as the local legislation, District Councils are not given

power. Unlike the Legislative Council, District Councils by themselves do not possess power to make decisions, to employ staff or to allocate money. The influence that we have given District Councils over the years is out of respect and recognition of the representativeness of these members. We have allowed them to have a say on the use of the public money, which is controlled by a public official in the name of the Director of Home Affairs. That is the constitutional position. It does not constitute any taking away of power as you have described, but I hope this is a matter of semantics. I am sure you understand the constitutional status of District Councils that they are advisory bodies to give advice when being asked by the Government and also to advise on the use of funds when being asked by the Government.

On the third point, I can only generally talk about our declaration system. We have a very robust declaration of interests system, both applicable to Executive Council members as well as Principal Officials, and these interests are disclosed to the public for inspection under what we call an annual declaration of registrable interests. What registrable interest that needs to be declared is clearly laid out in the form that you can find on the website. I don't want to comment on individual cases except to impress upon you that we have a very robust system, but at the end of the day this is an honour system. We do not check, monitor or investigate into registrable interests of each member. You can see for yourselves on the existing website about the current members on the Executive Council that they have declared in a very detailed and meticulous way their beneficial interests. Thank you.

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