

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (November 28):

Reporter: Good morning Mr Lee. The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang, said the Government will not appoint candidates who lost in the upcoming District Council Election into the Council. Who are the Government looking for? Can you give us some information on this? The second question is, we have seen a worrying situation of youth suicides since schools began in September. NGOs and experts said academic pressure and the resumption of face-to-face schooling were factors behind the situation. The Government earlier said that it will study recent cases as it will provide a three-tier measure to take care of students' mental health. What have the Government found out so far and are the measures enough in addressing and providing timely care and support? Thank you.

Chief Executive: In our appointment of candidates to be District Council members, of course we will look at what he will contribute to the overall good, to the wellbeing of district matters, particularly as a member of the District Council. This of course will involve, first of all, his experience, his background, his knowledge of the district, whether he has specific professional knowledge or particular interests of issues that we believe he will be of contribution. For the basic requirement, of course, he has to be a patriot and fulfil the requirement of supporting the Basic Law, and bearing allegiance to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. It is also important that we look at his competence, his experience, his background, his knowledge, and whether he has things to offer. We want to ensure that all District Council members will fulfil their duties as a member of this consultative council for the benefit of people living in the district.

As regards the recent indications of some students facing problems for different reasons, where they have a tendency of not seeking help, but trying to do something which is harmful to their own health, in the worst case, commit suicide. The Government is very serious about it and we have already been co-ordinating efforts in this area with the education sector, the welfare sector, and the medical sector.

The Government will do its utmost to address the situation. But it is also important that everybody in Hong Kong plays his part to help promote mental health generally, in particular, of our youths. Because while it is the Government's responsibility to promote and protect mental health among our students, they are in different corners, they are in different schools and in different districts of the 18 districts. It is important that neighbours, friends, relatives, peers, and also stakeholders who come across their cases, when they think that they are in need of counselling assistance,

they will help them and also seek assistance from the Government. Through it, a collective job of everybody with the Government taking the forefront and the leadership role, everybody should participate because this is our hope, and the youths are our future. What the Government is doing is, we look at different ways to help students. First of all, for students in schools. We need to identify them early, so that we can give them the right counselling, the right assistance. And for the needy cases, we refer them to experts, including social welfare workers, school education counsellors, and also where professional medical services is needed, we refer to the right doctors, the right psychologists. That is one thing.

The other thing is when schools need help, we will provide the help they need. We will be calling for resources outside the school, such as from the welfare sector, from the education sector, and also from the medical sector, so that we can help the students at the right stage so that their cases won't deteriorate into the most urgent cases that we have to refer them to medical experts. And we have increased resources for schools. We will also be improving general mental health such as through awareness programmes, prevention programmes, and collective awareness-building including teachers, parents and even workers who will be involved in this area. Also, the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration is co-ordinating the efforts of three bureaux, which include the Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau, and the Health Bureau. We will be looking at all the information available, such as the causation, etc., with information supplied by investigators in all these sad cases, which include the Police, so that we will be able to find out more about the causation.

So far, the indication has been that our youths face pressure in relation to some of the matters that relate to their studies and their daily dealing with people. Of course, three years of COVID may have an effect, and that is why we need to give the right assistance to youths in schools so that they will be able to build up their mental capacity and mental resilience. And character building, I think, is something we need to work hard together on. So there will be some youth development camps and activities that promote youth character in this regard, such as discipline training and their overall career path development, and also our youth programmes for them to take part. All these add to it, but there is no single panacea. It has to be a collective effort in different regards, from different people, and it has to be a collective effort led by the Government, and actively participated by everybody in society. Thank you.

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