

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 (February 6):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Lee. Firstly, an investigation by the South China Morning Post has found that nearly 90 per cent of houses in three upmarket estates have encroached on government land, with most of them having suspected unauthorised structures as well. What is the Government's progress in inspecting other luxury estates as promised after the Red Hill Peninsula saga, and will it consider inspecting all these detached luxury residences to show its determination in rectifying this unfair problem? Secondly, how will the Government enhance its supervision of the "M" Mark events going forwards to prevent a repeat of the Messi fiasco? And will it facilitate and handle the requests for refunds since the organiser has not addressed this as well? Thank you.

Chief Executive: In regard to unauthorised building structures, the Government has already made its policy very clear. There will be a risk-based approach because of the large number of buildings involved. And we will set priorities in accordance with the scale of the problem, the seriousness of the problem, particularly the safety consideration and environmental hazard consideration. We will set our priorities in this way so that we can address what we consider as unauthorised illegal structures that deserve our early attention. We will continue to inspect and also take action in accordance with these priorities.

In regard to the saga relating to Inter Miami exhibition match on Sunday, it was of course very undesirable and extremely disappointing for this to happen in such a way that the public expectations of Messi showing up and playing in the match did not materialise. What is important in this case is, first of all, we will keep on urging the organiser to explain to the public in detail what actually happened, what were the details of the agreement between them and the team, and also why in the course of the communications with the Government, despite all the suggestions and demands made by the Government, nothing materialised.

While the organiser has withdrawn the application for the "M" Mark status, and also withdrawn the application for the subsidy for the sponsorship, they still have the responsibility to explain to members of the public, particularly those who have bought tickets to get into the stadium to watch the match. It is their responsibility to explain and also to answer to the demands of those who have bought the tickets. And it's also their responsibility to answer to the disappointment of all the audiences there, in particular, those young children who were there with full passion and hope. The Government will continue to urge them to do what it is required to do.

Also, the Customs and Excise Department as well as the Consumer Council have received numerous reports regarding the complaints of what the complainants experienced. All these complaints will be examined in detail according to the contents of the complaints and will be dealt with accordingly by these two organisations. Then, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau will continue to review this incident and also examine the way forward on how we will ensure, in future, the right protection of Hong Kong's interest, such that there will be a contingency plan well prepared ahead of the actual event, and good, accurate and timely information will be disseminated by the organiser so that people will know the progress and make their own assessment as how they will participate in all these events.

We will continue to promote and organise large-scale activities in Hong Kong because this is important for Hong Kong, for economic reasons, for promoting Hong Kong's image and also promoting Hong Kong's competitiveness. But we will, in due course, also ensure that we will have the right mechanism in place to ensure that if public money is spent, then they will be properly scrutinised and there will be a good supervision system to ensure that the rights of the people who will be participating, and also the overall interest of Hong Kong, are well protected. We will continue to work towards that goal. Thank you.

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