

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 (April 9):

Reporter: Morning. Two questions. The first question is about the waste charging scheme. So just to follow up on the comments from Lo Man-tuen. He said yesterday that the Government should consider postponing or even scrapping the waste charging policy after the trial. He said it's an impossible mission, and the controversy may be wasting our energy. So what do you make of his comments? And second question is about the patriotic education working group that was announced yesterday. So what are the criteria for choosing the members of the group? And can you tell us how the authorities will assess its performance in promoting patriotic education? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I think we have made the government position on waste charging very clear. It is already the law of Hong Kong, so the Government has to think of a proper way to implement it and to take it forward. We have launched a testing scheme to test its implementation at 14 locations comprising different characteristics, including government buildings, commercial buildings, catering businesses, care homes, and also public estates. The purpose is to collect the data such as the participation rate, the overall supporting facilities, and steps that need to be considered if we are to take forward the waste charging scheme. We are serious about doing this test to ensure that we have collected sufficient data to let us decide how to take it forward. We will be collecting views from participants as well as different sectors. Of course, we will listen to opinions of the public, because the waste charging scheme is going to affect the whole population of Hong Kong of 7.5 million. Everybody, of course, will have their own opinion about the waste charging scheme, its implementation process, its pace, and also the peripheral facilities, supporting facilities that need to go hand in hand. We will be listening to views. Legislators' opinions are also important, because they do represent a lot of citizens. Everybody has their own opinions, but the government position remains clear. We want to ensure that we apprehend and comprehend the real situation fully, so that we decide the way forward. We will announce our decision once we have come to that stage. We have already indicated that by maybe May or June, we will be making that decision and making an announcement. I think we should give time to this trial scheme. Do contribute your opinions. We are happy to listen to all possible views and eventually take everything into consideration as to decide what we will do in the next step.

Regarding patriotic education, it is already in my Policy Address. I think patriotic education is important, because our integration into our country's national development is a very important opportunity for us to grasp the development potentials for Hong Kong. Secondly, it is important for us to know our root, our culture, our history, and also the contemporary

developments of our country. All these will add to not just the successful development or personal pursuit, it will also enrich the general values and culture of Hong Kong, because I think knowing our history, knowing our culture and knowing where we come from, and how we come to this stage is important. Different places have different historic backgrounds, and also different developments. It is important that through patriotic education, we become a united family, sharing more consensus and sharing more common values. This is important.

We have a steering group on promoting the Constitution, and also the Basic Law education (Constitution and Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee). Under the steering committee, we have set up different working groups. One working group (Working Group on Patriotic Education), which has just recently been set up, is on patriotic education. We pick members based on their knowledge in regard to, first of all, our country's history, our country's culture, and their passion and love for the country, because I want them not just to be the workers; I want them to be the leaders; I want them to radiate their knowledge and passion on to those we want to educate. It is important for them to not just have good knowledge, but then they are keen to do their job, so that they will think of different ways to approach the subject of patriotic education.

The areas include, first of all, education for teaching staff and education for students, because this is the most important area. We want the new generation to really appreciate our Chinese culture, our Chinese history, and also the contemporary developments of our country. We also want to organise activities with different sectors for students and teachers. These include inter-school activities, probably some competitions, exchanges, workshops and quizzes. It will be up to the working group to design and recommend different methodologies and activities to the steering committee. Then of course, I will be asking for a certain number of activities to be conducted. This, of course, will be decided by the steering committee. What is important is the commitment and passion to do it. It will be important to look at quantity, but what I am after more will be the quality of the education, because after all, it is the passion and the love that we want to create and promote in the whole exercise. Thank you.

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