

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 (February 23):

Reporter: Secretary Patrick Nip said Hong Kong Government is studying legislation to prohibit insulting public officials. What do you think of this effort? Could it restrict the free speech of Hong Kong residents? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, we are not in a so-called "very mature stage" of considering legislation in that respect, but it has been the aspiration of many of my frontline officers. It's not just police officers but many public officers in the front line. In recent years, they have been intimidated, threatened and insulted in carrying out their duties, and this is no good for a civic society. There have been suggestions in the Legislative Council that the Government should seriously look into enacting a piece of legislation to prohibit or to control that sort of behaviour. But as I said, we have a lot of competing demands on our plate, so to speak. I have already outlined earlier this month, there are five important areas that the Government needs to legislate within the current term of the Legislative Council, which is about a few months. I would say that this is not one of the pieces of legislation that has been put at the very high priority. But one day, if we were to legislate, I think we would be very careful in striking the needed balance. Yes, the Basic Law protects and upholds rights of individuals including freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, but as many court cases have made it very clear, these rights and freedoms are not without limitations. When they undermine another person's right, then something needs to be done. There has to be a very delicate and very serious balancing act to be done if one were to consider such a piece of legislation. At the moment, we have not reached that stage.

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