

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on concluding his visit to three ASEAN member states (with photos/video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this afternoon (July 28), on concluding his visit to three ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states:

Reporter: May I know how you think this trip helped to consolidate Hong Kong's position in the ASEAN region, and also because you mentioned that the three countries support Hong Kong's bid to join the RCEP. But is there any progress on this? And also, how do you respond to the Washington Post reports that you've been blocked from joining the APEC later this year? And because you mentioned that there will be some rules like for the APEC host to invite people joining the APEC, so will you have any countermeasures? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I attach great importance to Hong Kong's relation with ASEAN member states, and that is one of the key purposes of our visit this week. I'm very pleased and satisfied that the leaders of the three countries that we have visited all attach similar importance to our visit, and we have started very good dialogue and built up our friendship. We have already come to quite a clear consensus that co-operation is the way forward and we should expand co-operation and enhance exchange of knowledge and experience, because we all believe co-operation will help each other.

The relationship between Hong Kong and ASEAN member states has always been good. This has been so during my day-to-day contacts with representatives of ASEAN states in Hong Kong, and also it is a very clear impression and feeling that we came across during our visit in this week. With the support of the 10 countries of ASEAN for Hong Kong to get into the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) as a member, we feel, of course, very happy and grateful for the support. We do think that Hong Kong can contribute to the overall value creation of the region once we have become a member because Hong Kong is a free economy, we have a lot of strengths and professional services that we can offer to regional co-operation, and the RCEP represents about one-third of economic activities and population, and the economic engine for growth is going to be Asia and this region, so it will be a win-win situation if we can successfully join the RCEP. I, of course, have good optimism but we are also pragmatic because the procedure to get a session to be a member of the RCEP is a process that will be designed and also started by RCEP member states and the RCEP secretariat. But we will work tirelessly to ensure that our case is well made out to member states and the values that we can create will be beneficial to regional co-operation.

Regarding APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), I have made my position very clear and I have made it clear many times openly. First of all, APEC is an international organisation that has guidelines, protocols and conventions to operate. And it is the guidelines, protocols and conventions of APEC for the host economy or country to extend invitation to the leaders of the member economies. Hong Kong is a member economy of APEC. I would expect the host economy to act in accordance with APEC rules, guidelines and conventions to issue invitations to the leaders of the member economies. It has been the practice for so many years and we have been acting in accordance with these rules, guidelines and conventions. Hong Kong will participate in APEC meeting in accordance with these rules and guidelines.

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

