

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session in Singapore (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, led a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region delegation to continue its visit to Singapore today (July 24). Following is the transcript of remarks by Mr Lee at a media session in Singapore this evening:

Chief Executive: This is my first visit to Singapore as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC (People's Republic of China). I attach great importance to this visit. I have brought with me 30 high-level representatives from Hong Kong. They come from such sectors as industry and commerce, financial services, transport, logistics, legal services, and innovation and technology (I&T). Joining me also are five most senior officials of the Government of Hong Kong.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is Hong Kong's second largest trading partner globally. Among ASEAN states, Singapore is the largest partner in terms of trade in goods with us. We are here to consolidate our friendship with Singapore and other ASEAN states. We wish to strengthen our long-standing co-operation for mutual growth. More importantly, we wish to tell our friends here the good and latest stories of Hong Kong. From our traditional strengths of finance, trade and logistics, to the upcoming industries of I&T, arts and cultural exchange, Hong Kong is determined to bring in new impetus for sustainable development that will energise the whole region's growth. My delegation and I will take every opportunity to introduce Hong Kong's new developments, new potentials and new attractions to our friends in ASEAN during our visit.

Earlier today, I had the pleasure of meeting Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong. I will also be meeting Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat this evening at the business dinner that will begin shortly.

At the meeting with the Prime Minister and government officials, I expressed my gratitude to Singapore for its continuous support to Hong Kong's bid to join RCEP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Hong Kong stands ready to engage in exploratory discussions with RCEP members on our accession request. I also congratulated Deputy Prime Minister Wong on his appointment last year as the leader of Singapore's fourth-generation team.

Earlier this afternoon, our delegation visited an international engineering consultancy firm headquartered in Singapore, and welcomed their ongoing investment in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Hong Kong and Singapore have long been in co-operation and experience

sharing. We are both external-oriented economies that relish in trade co-operation and vibrancy in activities. At the business dinner this evening, Hong Kong and Singapore will be signing seven memoranda of understanding on trade, financial services, fintech, I&T, and research collaboration. I am confident that our partnership will continue to go from strength to strength.

Reporter: Some ASEAN country nationals visiting Hong Kong still require a visa, especially Vietnam. Is there any plan to expand a visa waiver programme to these countries to facilitate the entry of their people? And on the golf course, the club is hoping to delay the return of the plot in the JR (judicial review) application. How sure are you that the land can be taken back in September and how confident is the Government in winning the lawsuit? Finally, what is the...APEC summit in November?

Chief Executive: Our co-operation with ASEAN countries is something that I'm advocating. Where it's possible to do facilitation, we will. And we will, of course, look into each and every case to see how much we can do in this regard. There has been progress in different areas with the entry consideration in respect of different countries. We will have to examine the issues with the relevant governments according to the actual situation. My attitude is where we can, we will do our best.

As regards the golf course, I know the golf course association (the Hong Kong Golf Club) has filed a judicial review against the environmental report, and the judicial process has started, so I will make no more comment. I respect the judicial proceeding. But it doesn't affect our plan to take back those pieces of land that we have announced that we will take back. We think that taking back the land will not prevent any big events from taking place in the golf course, because we have actually three golf courses which conform to international standards. We are taking 30 hectares of land and that will not affect the launching of large-scale competitions. We have also made it very clear, that where there's a need to make use of those areas of land we have taken back, we are most willing to let competition event organisers use the land. Let us know and we will facilitate as much as possible. There is no plan not to take back the land as we have announced.

As regards APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) attendance, I have said many times it is the responsibility of the host economy to send invitations to the members. That has been the practice and convention, and that has been the rules of APEC. APEC is an international organisation that doesn't belong to any particular country or economy. Hong Kong, of course, will play by the APEC rules. We will act in accordance with the APEC practices and tradition. Thank you.

Reporter: What is the significance of signing the seven understandings on, you said, trade and also financial and also research? Does this mean there will be more Hong Kong businesses in Singapore and more Singapore businesses in Hong Kong?

Chief Executive: I think there will be more businesses both ways. The seven memoranda of understanding (MOU) mean that we have already agreed to open up co-operation in those seven areas. That means both ways, activities will

start. I am very glad that the parties who will sign the MOUs have already geared up for many ideas as to how they will promote co-operation in those seven areas.

Signing of MOUs is like opening a door for people to then pass through and carry out activities in those areas. For example, following my last visit to the Middle East, we have signed over 10 MOUs and already I have known of some deals being closed, some offices being set up in Hong Kong, and actually, some visits have been made to Hong Kong as well, to look at investment opportunities and also organise conferences and summits. So, all these positive signs will thereafter result in some actual closing of deals or signing of contracts. I am very positive that we will be signing seven MOUs and develop co-operation opportunities in those seven areas. Thank you.

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

