

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session after attending the 2023 Policy Address District Forum today (August 27):

Reporter: How does the new protocol about officials attending the events work and who is going to be monitoring? Is that an idea purely sparked by the recent farewell event? And for the stock market task force you've just mentioned, why did you see a need and how it can be improved? And the final question is – will Hong Kong follow the Mainland to extend the ban to all aquatic products from Japan and why or why not?

Chief Executive: In regard to the consensus I want to build with organisers of events, this is as a result of my personal experiences. Since I have assumed office, I thank the support of a lot of organisations who have been inviting me and my Government officials to attend their functions to be the guests of honour. And there is a heavy burden on the diary. But I'm quite willing to do what I can because this indicates my and the Government's support for organisers who have all along been trying to make contributions to the construction of Hong Kong. So, I thank them for the activities. But I'm concerned about the trend of organisers inviting a large number of my senior officials, and it can happen on occasions that a large number of senior officials attending the same function. What I would like to build as a consensus is I wish organisers could understand that the participation of a senior Government official at a function is the strong indication of our support to their activities and the strong desire to build a good dialogue and relationship with organisers of events that represent positive construction of the society. I want to make it a flexible system so that internally, within the Government, we can share out the workload. There will be good division of labour within us and we will be helping each other and sharing the work so as to ensure that we will have the right participation in all these events. So, my suggestion for this consensus is as a result of my personal experiences over the years, and the trend indicating that organisers want as many senior officials to participate as possible. Probably, they think that the number of officials participating represents Government's support. So what I am trying to say very clearly here is the participation of Government officials, no matter how big the number is, is already an indication of support, number doesn't matter.

The second thing is the task force that will be set up very soon. Hong Kong – I think one of the strong competitiveness factors is our position as an international financial centre, and it is one of the eight strengths and areas that we must ensure that we build it strong and also continue a success. I have heard a lot of opinions about the importance of ensuring the liquidity of our stock market. I have heard it through various means. I have also heard it during some consultations. That is why the Government has

decided to set up this task force to be led by the Financial Secretary. He will announce the details very quickly. And I also want the task force to start working very quickly so that they will give me recommendations so as to increase the liquidity of our stock market to strengthen our competitiveness as an international financial centre. I think that will help Hong Kong as a whole in regard to strengthening our economy and different regards as to our competitiveness.

As regards the exercise of the Japanese Government in pouring the nuclear-contaminated water into the sea, there is immediate risk, as well as long term risk. Immediate risk is the contamination that may affect aquatic products. That is why we have already banned the aquatic products from 10 metropolis/prefectures. Also, we will be testing each sample every day – each sample of aquatic products that comes into Hong Kong. And we will also test the non-aquatic products from Japan as well. That will ensure that we can avoid the risk that will cause harm to our food safety and also the health of our people. We also have to be careful about the long term risk because of the accumulative effect of radioactive substances being poured into the sea. And the accumulation – we are talking about a period of almost 30 years or even over, and a lot of experts have been worrying about this seriously. This is unprecedented. So, nobody can tell that it will be risk-free.

The other thing is, there is yet to see in the world, any system or any method that will be risk-free and free of human errors. So, we have to ensure that for a system which will run for such a long period, the reliability of the equipment, the maintenance of the system and the possibility of a human error in an exercise that will last for over 30 years. That is why we have to take stern and serious measures to ensure food safety and the health of our people. In Hong Kong, of course, people can be assured of the food safety. And all the things we do is to ensure that when we go to a restaurant, or when we go to buy food, we don't have to worry about food safety. And that is what we are doing.

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

