

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (April 11):

Reporter: So you said the people should monitor if the bosses are handing the subsidies to their workers, so what's the Government's role in this operation and how to prevent some of the bosses still asking the workers to go and have no-pay leaves, for example?

Chief Secretary for Administration: The entire purpose of the scheme is to ensure the continued operation of the enterprises concerned. It is incumbent on the employers concerned to ensure that there is no redundancy once they join the scheme. Also, it's more important to bear in mind that we should give them some flexibility in how to handle the exact so-called human resources policy of the respective enterprises. So that freedom, or that flexibility, is very important. But we've got two very important criteria. One is, as I said, no redundancy at all. The second thing is, all the subsidy from the Government for that particular purpose must go to paying staff salaries and not other purposes. A very restrictive approach. If they use the subsidy for other purposes, it will be totally unacceptable. We will claw back the money. Also, a very important safeguard is we'll ensure absolute transparency of the scheme. For any successful applicant, their amount of subsidy disbursed and so on will be released to the public, and also particularly to the employees concerned, so they know whether the employers have applied for the scheme and whether they are successful indeed. Finally, in Hong Kong we've got a very active media and also a very active trade union movement here. I'm sure that all these are very important watchdogs. But of course if there is any criminal element involved – conspiracy, dishonesty and so on – we will act in accordance with the law. Any outstanding sum not used will be clawed back. We are also considering imposing a penalty for any deviation from the so-called regulation or rules imposed by the scheme. Now, all these need to be thrashed out in the next few days. We will be going to Finance Committee (FC) coming Friday. A special FC meeting will be lined up. Then the whole thing will go firm, because there are still some minor details yet to be thrashed out.

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

