

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

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 (November 23):

Reporter: Mr Cheung, just a few English questions. Just how likely can the tunnel for really reopen by the end of next weekend? And also, how likely is that the tolls will, there will be a free charge for tolls for at least several days? And second question, because the court has temporarily reinstated the mask ban, does the government expect that reinstatement will affect the election tomorrow where the police will be empowered to stop people wearing masks entering the polling stations and given the current string relationship between the public and police, aren't the high profile patrol will spark tensions, spark conflicts?

Chief Secretary of Administration: First of all, the Hung Hom Cross Harbour Tunnel. We are very concerned about its re-opening. That's why we are leaving those unturned, trying to re-open it as soon as possible to restore its normal operation as soon as possible. I must say that I am very grateful to all department colleagues concerned. We've mobilised 380 staff members and contract staff yesterday throughout the day on the repair work in order to make sure that the tunnel can be re-opened as soon as possible.

Our target is that we strive to open it towards the end of next week, but much depends on the progress on the repair works particularly over the next 48 hours. So by next Monday afternoon, we should have a very good grasp of the exact re-opening time, whether it can be opened towards the end of the week or not. We will do our very best. In fact, we are now, as I said, doing our very best to speed up the repair work across the board, including the toll stations as well.

The second question is about the election. We are determined and committed to hold an orderly, peaceful, fair and honest election tomorrow. So I appeal to all members of the community, all members of the public to co-operate, to protect the election. It's a very important election because it's the first time that every single seat is contested. It's a real democratic exercise. I really want people to treasure it, to value it, exercise their right to vote, very importantly, exercise their civic right to vote. The presence of the police is important because, for every polling station, we must ensure that there is enough police present to deter any interference and also to really maintain law and order, to maintain safety of the polling staff as well as the electors and the candidates. So I don't think the high profile patrol of police will deter any people. On the other hand, if anything, it will encourage people to feel a sense of security that the police are around to protect them and also maintain law and order.

Reporter: Will people be stopped from wearing masks into the stations?

Chief Secretary of Administration: According to the rules, in fact they should take away anything covering their face, otherwise how can the staff recognise their identity? So before they enter the polling station, they will be encouraged and advised to take away, to remove their masks so that we know who they are, matching their identity with their ID card.

