

Transcript of remarks by CS, S for S, SCED and SED at media session (with video)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee; the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau; and the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, met the media this morning (November 20). Following is the transcript of remarks from the media session:

Reporter: Secretary, what is your plan in trying to put through zeal religious leaders, teachers, lawmakers, as well as political heavy-weights and Uni heads, trying to persuade people inside the Polytechnic University to come out? But still, some still are remaining, some would rather go through the sewage system to try and make an escape. Is that wishful thinking on your side to continue to persuade them to peacefully come out and surrender themselves to you, speaking the same line as in the past couple of days? What is your plan to ensure the safe passage of those people out of the Polytechnic University, since you said that it is a dangerous environment inside?

Secretary for Security: I think it needs all parties to help. If you look at the figures that I have told you, we have around 800 to 900 people who are willing to surrender, so we keep working on that. For those who still haven't made up their mind to come out to surrender, then of course we will continue to persuade them through all sorts of means. And I think society's efforts collectively will help. And it is important, I think, that the right message given to them that whatever their self-proclaimed purpose is, if their act contravenes the law, then everybody has to take up their responsibility. And that is an important message because that will be important for Hong Kong to continue as a law-abiding city. And that message must be spread and particularly people who are in the legal sector. I think the message of rule of law is that everybody is equal before the law. And of course I am sure the court will take into consideration individual circumstances and the circumstances regarding individuals. So we have full faith that the whole thing will be dealt in a very just way. (The Secretary for Security met the media again at 2.20pm at the Legislative Council Complex on the same issue. Please refer to [the transcript of remarks](#) issued at 4pm for details.)

Reporter: Mr Lee, do you think the election this week can help to ease the current unrest in Hong Kong or make things worse?

Secretary for Security: Well, I do not want to speculate on anything. But the most important thing is we will have to tell everybody who are still remaining on the campus, that first of all, it will be dangerous for them to remain. And it will be something that they have to admit that if they contravene the law, they have to face the consequences of the law. The rule of law will ensure that everybody will be dealt with justly. The Police's

effort and the Government's effort and I think the whole society's effort is to ensure that the whole thing will be resolved in a peaceful manner as much as we can. So I will not speculate on any positive action to whatever is happening now. But I think it is important that we all try to de-escalate the whole matter.

Reporter: Secretary, could you talk about the images we have seen this morning of uniformed students being lined up at some MTR stations and being checked by the Police? Do you have any concerns on the psychological impact on those students?

Secretary for Education: I am not too sure about the details of the particular incidents that you mentioned. But I think when the Police need to take some action, they are just trying to protect the law and order of society. And I think every citizen in society should comply with that. When you talk about whether they will have any psychological effect, I think the school will try their best to help the students to understand what the Police are doing.

Reporter: Mr Cheung, can I ask you, the elections this weekend, how important are they for Hong Kong? Do you think they will help ease the current unrest or make things worse?

Chief Secretary for Administration: The Government attaches great importance to this upcoming election. This election will be the largest ever. Every single seat will be contested, so it's a really meaningful, democratic exercise. That's why we are extremely keen, I stress extremely keen, to see a proper, a safe, a fair, honest and particularly impartial election this Sunday. But much depends on the co-operation of violent protesters. It takes two to tango. No matter how committed we are to maintain law and order, it really counts on whether they co-operate. If they start vandalising, start violence, start arson in many places, blocking the roads, stopping traffic, it will be very difficult for people to go to the election and feeling unsafe, then it will really ruin this election. So I call on everybody to treasure this opportunity, cast your vote, exercise a civic right and protect this upcoming election.

Reporter: Is the Hong Kong Government threatening because you kept saying that there will be harm to bilateral relations. It is also a special status given to Hong Kong by the US (United States). Do you have any specific evidence or views that contribute to your repeated statement that this is meddling with Hong Kong's internal affairs?

Chief Secretary for Administration: I will leave this to Mr Yau.

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: Let me clarify one point. You were saying that Hong Kong's separate customs territory status is given by the US. This is factually wrong. Constitutionally, under Article 116 and Article 151 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong is given this special status where we can represent ourselves as a separate customs territory and also represent ourselves using Hong Kong, China, differentiating from the Mainland in taking

part in many of the multilateral trading regimes, such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Just to give you some examples. This is not a gift from a single country. It is a constitutional right and a privilege given to Hong Kong under the "one country, two systems" principle.

The second point is that the US has all along been respecting this "one country, two systems" principle, as they often proclaim. I think the existing US policy towards Hong Kong gives us that respect. Any unilateral change of their stance will not change Hong Kong's constitutional status because we will remain a separate customs territory, and a member alongside with the Mainland of China and the US in the WTO. Certainly, I think such unilateral measure will affect, if not harm, the mutual and common interests between Hong Kong and the US, noting that we are major trading partners, not to mention that every year, the US enjoys the largest trade surplus from Hong Kong and trade is a two-way street. Any ways that affect the relationship will certainly hamper the relationship.

I also mentioned that our relationship is more than trade and dollar sign. When we are talking about human rights and democracy, I must say that these rights are protected by the Basic Law of Hong Kong. Article 4 of the Basic Law protects human rights. We have seen all these rights including rights given to anybody working and reporting in Hong Kong being protected. On these we have our self-interests to do good, so I don't see any valid reasons for changing that. That also explains why in our statement, we strongly object to any attempt by any country to try to influence Hong Kong's own interests, and that's also why I said the US' piece of Act recently passed by the House and the Senate respectively is unwarranted and unnecessary.

I also mentioned that the passage of such legislative attempt would stand a chance of sending a wrong signal to the situation of Hong Kong. I don't want people to be mistaken. The unwarranted foreign intervention is adding fuel to fire in this rough situation of Hong Kong. Certainly, I don't see there's any possible way that this will de-escalate the situation we are having, so I would urge people to refrain from meddling with the already delicate situation of Hong Kong. The problem of Hong Kong is of course a matter for Hong Kong people, the Hong Kong community and our government. We are trying every endeavor to improve the situation and I would urge all parties to work together. As the Chief Secretary and our colleagues often mention, we are working on a very tough pathway, we need people to understand and work together and certainly we don't want any distorted pictures to make the situation more convoluted. Thank you.

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