

Transcript of remarks by CS, S for S, STH 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 Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; and the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, met the media this afternoon (November 18). Following is the transcript of remarks from the media session:

Reporter: Why are we only hearing from officials about this now? Where has the leadership from this administration been over this violent weekend of clashes – it's been left to lawmakers, social workers, teachers to try to find a solution or to de-escalate the situation, so where has the administration been? And secondly your appeal to people not to go to PolyU, there's already plans for people to go there. What other measures do you have to de-escalate the situation or to negotiate something to bring about a peaceful resolution?

Secretary for Security: Well, we are trying to de-escalate the situation, that is why there have been repeated announcements by the Police that they (protestors) should peacefully and orderly surrender themselves at designated points to the police officers. If they do that, if they do not resort to violence, then no force will be used. The Police will then take appropriate action and the whole thing can be resolved peacefully. Other things that we have done include sending medical teams, which is the Red Cross, into the campus, so as to take care of people who are in need of medical service. The Government has also formed a team comprising social workers from the Social Welfare Department and government clinical psychologists to go into the campus to take care of the minors – those who are under 16 years old – and then come with them, so that they can go with these minors together with the Police to the police station, so the whole process can be dealt with there. What is important is also the appeal by everybody to de-escalate. The Government, particularly the Police, have been appealing to everybody to peacefully and orderly leave the place. That's the best way to deal with it, because the campus has become very dangerous. It is full of weapons, full of dangerous goods, full of things that may explode all of a sudden, full of corrosive liquid, so it is already a very dangerous place. And as you have seen, fire had been set, so it is important that those who want to leave peacefully then come out, act in accordance with the police's directions. And anybody inside should leave as soon as possible.

Chief Secretary for Administration: Over the past few months, the political team under the leadership of Mrs Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive, were not sitting on our hands at all. In fact, on the contrary, we've been leaving no stone unturned over the last few months to put an end to the violence, to this uncertainty, instability, and find a viable way forward. Now we've

responded fully to all the demands, to the best of our ability including withdrawing the extradition bill completely. So the whole issue is now dead and it's now really out of the agenda of Legislative Council. This is a very important demonstration of our sincerity to respond to the demands of the community – point number one.

At the same time we are adopting a three-pronged approach. On the one hand, realistically, we must put an end to violence. Unless you've gotten a peaceful environment with law and order restored to a law-abiding Hong Kong, you won't have the environment, the ambience to conduct dialogue. That's why the second prong is actually to open up channels of communication, for all sectors of the community, across the full spectrum of the community to tap their views, to feel their pulse. In fact, all political appointees including the CE, myself and all the political appointees, have been seeing groups behind closed doors. To those people who are vociferous, or vocal, who are very angry about the Government, we have already sat down with them and had candid, frank exchanges. The whole purpose is to really build rapport, narrow the gap, at the same time identify possible options, alright? And finally, we've been very determined to tackle the whole basket of deep-seated, long entrenched fundamental social conflicts embedded in the community for years and years including, for example, land and housing supply, affordable housing, which is at the core of the whole problem; the wealth gap between the rich and the poor which divide the haves and have-nots; upward mobility for the community, youth employment opportunities and so on and so forth. And the social justice as well which is about the arguments going on at the moment. So we are doing it on three fronts and as I've said we are sparing no efforts. We'll continue to do our best, but our fundamental task, prime task before us at the moment, everybody agrees, overriding priority is to tackle violence, bring it to an end so that Hong Kong can be a peaceful community, so we can be back to our familiar Hong Kong, law-abiding Hong Kong with rule of law and independent judiciary.

Reporter: Mr Cheung, the Government has recently set up a crisis management committee to tackle the mayhem, but it seems in the past few days there is no visible improvement of the situation. What the committee has done so far apart from repeated condemnation of violence? It seems that the Government is not on the back of majority support of the people, unlike the situation in the 1967 riots. And second question is for Mr Lee. Mr Lee, as the minister in charge of the anti-mask law, under the political accountability system, will you take responsibility for not ensuring that the anti-mask law is legally watertight?

Chief Secretary for Administration: First of all the action task force actually kick-started over the weekend, in fact under my chairmanship. I convened the group myself. In the past few months, we've already gotten coordinated mechanisms working under various formats, but I thought it would be useful to bring it together as a unified body, so that it can be more efficiency and we can respond even faster, more effectively.

A good example, as reported by Mr Frank Chan, Secretary for Transport and Housing, is that we've decided to provide ferry services, free-of-charge

ferry services, operating between Hung Hom and Wan Chai and also between Kowloon City and Wan Chai as soon as possible. This is because the Hung Hom Cross-Harbour Tunnel is now completely in tatters. In fact, the headquarters building has been severely savaged beyond recognition. It will take some time before it can be in operation again. So we are really trying to meet the needs of the community to make life easier for them. In other words, we provide an alternative, ferry services, and also rearrange a lot of bus routes as well. Although commuters will take a little longer time, they at least won't find it totally inaccessible to other parts of the community. This is one small thing, but if you put all things together, we can provide an environment for the community to get back to normal. Some may say that there's no tangible effect, but I would say that it takes time. But, as I said, the ferry services is a good example. It's a very small example but it's a very good example. It will be available very shortly. Mr Lee.

Secretary for Security: Well, first of all, the judicial process hasn't come to an end yet. The judgment today is not the end of the judicial process. On Thursday (should be Wednesday), there will be another hearing and it will not be appropriate for me at this stage to make any comment when the judicial process is still ongoing.

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