

Transcript of remarks by SCS at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, on civil service pay offers and the updated Civil Service Code at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (June 8):

Reporter: The overall updated Civil Service Code, like you mentioned, the more senior staff should be more cautious about like speaking out their opinions publicly. How would you define the senior level? Does that refer to specific titles, levels, authorities? Does that mean they should avoid attending any types of public campaign, like even those they are not directly opposing Government policies, for example, they attend a campaign that supports environmental awareness, even though the Government doesn't have a strong stance against that. Could they do that? Secondly, about the three per cent salary adjustment for public servants, you've mentioned there isn't much room for improvement or adjustment, but obviously the unions have expressed strong opposition against the increase level. So how concern about affecting the morale, like especially among the lower level civil servants?

Secretary for the Civil Service: I think for civil servants, it's really a matter of gradation. The higher you move up, the more conscious of how even your private expressions, your private views would be interpreted by the public, whether your private views will be related to your official position. In these matters, it's really a matter of gradation. It's difficult to draw a solid line below which you can be very carefree about what you speak, above which you have to be really very cautious. As you move up, I think civil servants would have to really take care. And also civil servants working in different positions, working on different subject matters have to take care about what they said, in particular what their job is about. There are various factors to be considered.

As to social activities, campaigns and so on, we have set out very clearly in the Code that civil servants can also have their political life. They can join social activities, except where we have strict rules about not being able to join. They can join. The principle is when they join social activities, they have to ensure that joining or participation in these social activities would not cause conflict of interest with their jobs and also their joining would not allow people or attract people to believe that they are representing the Government's position or the activities they joined have Government backing or allow people to think that they are actually representing civil servants or a larger group of civil servants' views. So they have to take care of all these when they participate in social activities.

As to the three per cent increase, whether it will affect civil servants' morale, I believe that civil servants will be able to understand that there are constraints on what the Government can do this year,

especially given our very tight financial situation. And also I think as we progress with our various initiatives to improve livelihood and to improve the economy, there would be recognition of the public of what the civil servants have done. And this is also something that would be able to boost morale.

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