

Transcript of remarks by SJ and S for S on Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, and the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at a media session after attending a radio programme today (October 5):

Reporter: We have seen many radical protests in many districts last night after the law was announced. So would you say that the law was like adding oil to fire? That is the first question. And the second question is as in previous Chinese question, we see that some airline workers or those working for Chinese companies may fear retaliations from their employers, and they may wear masks when they go to some legal, authorised protests. But now they can't do that. Would you say this restrict their own rights? Thank you.

Secretary for Justice: Can I perhaps answer the second question first? Hong Kong respects the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and, of course, privacy. But these rights are not absolute. Therefore, by regulating or providing the Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation, it provides a balance in the light of the current situation. In the past, people have been participating in these protests, demonstrations, meetings, which are peaceful and in accordance with the law. In other words, these have been notified to the Police where such is necessary. These have not caused any problem. So we really fail to see why there is this concern, bearing in mind that we not only have the laws that respect the right and freedom, we also have laws that we regulate employment regulations and so on. So I think that's my response to the second question.

Secretary for Security: The introduction of the anti-mask regulation is to make sure that those who commit crimes and commit violence will have to face justice, so that they cannot hide behind their masks to escape their responsibilities. What is adding oil to violence is people's support to these acts or people's acquiescence in finding reasons for these violence to continue. So what is important is that everybody comes out to say "no! society will not accept violence". Violence is not a solution whether you are asking for is right or wrong – that is not the method. Society would not allow it. That is what we should all do. By not saying these things, people are adding oil to this violence.

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