

Transcript of remarks of inter-departmental press conference (with photos/video)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, together with the Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Environmental Hygiene), Miss Diane Wong; the Acting Deputy Director of Fire Services, Mr Yeung Yan-kin; the Deputy Commissioner for Transport (Transport Services and Management), Ms Macella Lee; the Deputy Director of Highways, Mr Ng Wai-keung; and the Deputy Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services (Trading Services), Mr Patrick Cheung, held an inter-departmental press conference this afternoon (November 26). Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Secretary, how would you expect the traffic condition around the tunnel to be like tomorrow morning? Are we going to be seeing even more congestion, like worse congestion than we are used to, tomorrow? And wouldn't a partial reopening, for example for bus services first, be, well, better so people can gradually ease into the situation? A second question: Is there really very limited things that the Government can do to prevent the tunnel from being blocked again? Like, will officers, will police officers, be stationed in the area, or are there any other measures to ensure that traffic around the tunnel will be smooth? And with roads around the PolyU campus reopening, the tunnel is reopening tomorrow, is the Police going to change its operation around the campus, or is it just going to be as usual, a waiting game basically?

Chief Secretary for Administration: For the first question, our plan is to re-open the tunnel at 5 o'clock in the morning tomorrow. So, we expect traffic to build up in the course of the day. As the Deputy Commissioner of Transport just stressed, we call on motorists to exercise self-restraint and particularly trying to be patient. We don't expect any worsening in the traffic condition because Hung Hom tunnel used to be a pretty smooth sort of tunnel, but still because after a fortnight's time, things may change a little bit. So, we are watching the situation closely, monitoring the situation closely. But as I said, co-operation is the key on all sides, both Government and also the motorists. As for the second question, certainly, Police will keep an eye on the tunnel after it's re-opened. The Police has also already made an assessment and considered it is safe to reopen tomorrow morning. We take a comprehensive assessment on the spot, on the ground.

Finally, as far as police tactics with regard to the campus situation in Polytechnic University, the Police will continue to adopt a patient, a persuasive and also a flexible approach in handling the issue – a generally soft approach in handling this. Our most important objective is to provide medical services to those still inside and are really in need, so that's why the Polytechnic University has already set up their own safety team and has

already been in the campus since, I think, 10.30 today. At the same time, the Government has also lined up another similar safety team comprising primarily Hospital Authority staff, our clinical psychologists, our Fire Services colleagues as well as social workers and supporting staff. We are ready to help if necessary. Our objective is really to use persuasive approach and patience to really appeal to them to come out for their own safety's sake. OK? We hope the whole thing will end peacefully. The Police stress time and again that a peaceful approach, a flexible approach and a human approach is adopted in tackling the issue.

Reporter: Why full opening now but not partial opening?

Chief Secretary for Administration: You mean the tunnel? Well, the reason is very simple. Originally we thought that it would take a little time for the toll booths to be restored. But thanks to the amazing efforts of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Highways Department, Transport Department – my colleagues around me today, we've really made a miracle come true. We managed to get all the electronic gadgets replaced within, say, 24 hours. So, now that we've got all the equipment ready, all the gear ready, we should not wait any longer. In other words, the toll booths will also operate in tandem, largely, with the tunnel itself. All right? So it is perfect timing. It's really a very satisfactory solution to the problem.

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

