

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks at a media session by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, after attending a radio programme this morning (January 19):

Reporter: Secretary, the Government has been trying to lobby and persuade lawmakers to support the proposal next Wednesday. Are you hopeful though so far given the conversations and discussions with lawmakers? And you also mentioned during the radio show that some lawmakers had suggested maybe the toll rise for the Eastern Harbour tunnel and Cross-Harbour Tunnel in Hung Hom can be a little less but you sort of rejected the idea as well. Could you explain why?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: When we are talking about the rationalisation of toll, we have to bear in mind the impact on drivers of private cars, taxi operators and motorcycle drivers. We are talking about a change in behaviour in the use of different tunnels. Therefore, the tunnel toll, the time taken to pass the tunnel, and the kind of perception of drivers' concern will come into play. A modest change in pricing would have induced less change in behaviour and the sustaining of the change in behaviour in the longer term. We have conducted a survey in respect of the inclination of drivers as to whether or not they would use the same tunnel or divert to use other tunnels and whether or not they would stop using that tunnel. We do have a conclusion as to the kind of change at different levels of toll. That is why we have explained very frankly to our friends in the legislature that such a change of below \$40 for the Cross-Harbour Tunnel in Hung Hom and the Eastern cross harbour tunnel (Eastern Harbour Crossing) would have less impact on their change of behaviour and consequently the queue length and also the delay congestion would be even much longer for the Hung Hom Cross-Harbour Tunnel and Eastern harbour tunnel (Eastern Harbour Crossing).

Reporter: ... on Wednesday, you are going to get the non-binding motion passed. Also you mentioned some difficulties in the Government's discussion with the operator of the Western harbour tunnel. Could you talk about that?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: We are facing quite a challenge in convincing our friends in the legislature to give us their entire support but we (have been) and are still working very hard from day one until now. We will continue to work (hard) until next Wednesday with a hope to convince them to give us their support. What we are talking about is not just about the rationalisation of toll for the three tunnels concerned. We are talking about the efficiency, the ease of transport. The entire transport infrastructure is not meant only for private cars but also for every person taking public transport in Hong Kong and the transport of food, products and waste. A city won't work if its transport system is congested or stuck. It won't be healthy because transport system of a city is very much like the circulation system of a human body. If the circulation is not good, the health of the body would not be good either.

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

Children and adolescents under guardianship commended for perseverance in facing adversity

The Director of Social Welfare (DSW), Ms Carol Yip, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs), Mr Vinci Wong, showed their care and concern for some 170 DSW wards as well as children and adolescents receiving residential care services from the TWGHs today (January 19) during a joyful reunion with them at the 2019 Award Presentation Ceremony for DSW wards co-organised by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the TWGHs. Those who made remarkable achievements or showed great improvements in academic studies, conduct, sports, arts and serving others last year were commended at the ceremony today.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ms Yip expressed her appreciation to the awardees for being able to stay resilient in the face of adversity, overcome difficulties and rise to challenges in life with a positive attitude. She extended her gratitude to relatives, carers, volunteers and social workers who have been offering care and support to these children and adolescents. She also encouraged other children and adolescents to continue to work hard and strive to attain their higher goals.

Ms Yip also thanked the TWGHs for co-organising and sponsoring the event, which has offered great encouragement and best wishes for children and adolescents over the years.

At the ceremony today, a total of 44 children and adolescents were presented with either Best Achievement Awards or Best Improvement Awards.

Tsz-yin, a 10-year-old boy, was presented with a Best Achievement Award. Tsz-yin became a DSW ward and was admitted to a small group home as his parents passed away due to illness several years ago and his relatives could not take care of him in the long run. Despite some mishaps, Tsz-yin, at such a tender age, demonstrated great perseverance and managed to cope with challenges in daily life and studies. With his hard work and care and support from the staff of the small group home and his relatives, he not only managed to adapt quickly to the environment of the small group home, but also made outstanding achievements in academic and extra-curricular activities. Looking ahead, Tsz-yin would like to pursue a career as a firefighter to save lives and contribute to society.

Another awardee, Yuet (pseudonym), a 16-year-old girl, has spent her childhood in a foster family since she was 3 as her mother was unable to take

care of her. The nurturance and support of the foster family has enabled Yuet to have a healthy upbringing and she also has had opportunities to develop her sports skills and leadership. She has excellent performance in inter-school athletics competitions and was elected as a house captain in school. Yuet also makes good use of her leisure time in volunteering to help the needy in the community and has received commendation for her service. She aspires to make contributions to society by serving as a nurse.

Children and adolescents are made wards of the DSW in accordance with the court procedures stipulated in the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Cap 213) for various reasons, such as death, loss, imprisonment, long-term hospitalisation or incapability of their parents, or their being unable or unsuitable to live with their family members. The SWD's case workers, according to the family conditions and needs of the wards, draw up appropriate long-term welfare plans for them, such as arranging for adoption or reunion with their families, or preparing them to live independently when they become grown-ups.

As at the end of November 2018, there were a total of 622 DSW wards. Among them, 46 per cent lived in foster care homes or small group homes. Thirty-two per cent lived in institutions while the rest lived on their own or with their parents, siblings or relatives.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Sha Tin tomorrow

Police advise motorists that special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Sha Tin to facilitate the race meeting tomorrow (January 20).

The arrangements will come into effect two hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

Appropriate traffic signs will be put up and police will be on hand to guide motorists.

The Police also appeal to people going to Sha Tin Racecourse for the race meeting and to Happy Valley Racecourse for cross betting to make maximum use of public transport.

Parking spaces at the two racecourses are available only to holders of appropriate permits issued by Hong Kong Jockey Club and any vehicles illegally parked will be towed away.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates of medical wards in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate of medical wards in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

Red flag hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 19) that due to big waves, red flag has been hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at the beach.