

Remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following are the remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (February 18):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Lee. Firstly, with regards to the taxi strike, the Hong Kong Tele-Call Taxi Association has earlier threatened that it would organise a five-day strike if the Government does not respond positively to their demands to crack down on ride-hailing. About the strike, you know, how seriously does the Government view this threat by the taxi sector, and would this threat sway the Government's stance on ride-hailing regulation? Secondly, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare has previously said that the Government administration would exchange data between departments to create a database for identifying hidden cases of at-risk carers. Do you think that the Government perhaps is a bit too slow in identifying hidden elderly or hidden carers? And also, can the Community Care Teams perhaps do more before the Government can set up this database in the meantime? Thank you.

Chief Executive: The Government position in respect of the improvement of taxi service and also to have a lawful system to govern online hailing platforms is clear. Taxi service needs to be improved. Car-hailing platforms need to be regulated, and enforcement action needs to be taken against unlawful hire car service. Any drastic action is not going to solve problems. Drastic actions may also hurt the interests of normal citizens in the course of their daily going-about of their lives. It is not going to receive public support. Also, there is a potential that the issue may change its nature, and the issue may be hijacked by some people with ulterior motives – that will be not in the interest of society and the citizens, and will not get public support. A large number of representatives from the taxi business have indicated that they will not support drastic actions. They will not take part. I think these issues need to be addressed with a good will, consciously, rationally, so as to find a solution to take the matter forward. The Transport and Logistics Bureau has already made a proposal to address the problem, and the proposal includes introducing taxi fleets so that the management control of taxi service can be enhanced. The proposal also includes having a legal framework to regulate online hailing platforms to ensure that citizens will have a lawful regime that ensures there will be proper and lawful service and allows them to use online hailing platforms.

Improving taxi service and regulating online hailing platforms is a problem that has been accumulating over a long period of time. The Government, since our assumption of office, has made a determination to address the problem and make a workable solution. We have made that proposal. Tomorrow, a working group of the Transport Advisory Committee will hold a meeting, and has invited representatives from the taxi trade and also representatives from online hailing platforms. Government representatives will also join the meeting, and it is a good opportunity for everybody to

talk through the whole thing rationally with a common will to move forward to find out a solution to solve this problem that has been accumulating over a long period of time. And I hope and believe that it would be in everybody's interest that all parties will rationally talk through the problem, give out their opinions, and then work together to push forward the implementation of the government proposal. I think that will be in the interest of all parties, in the interest of society and citizens.

Regarding a very unfortunate and sad incident of carers who, because of a lack of support, were left alone in their own home and not receiving assistance, we feel very sad about it, and of course, we must find a solution to address it. The Secretary for Labour and Welfare has already indicated that he is pushing forward a database so that we can collect data of individuals who are in need, who may not readily be known to service providers otherwise, and already a lot of action has been taken to approach different departments for such information. The Labour and Welfare Bureau has already approached the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data to see how we can push forward this database as soon as possible. My position is clear: the earlier this database can be created, the better. It does not have to be 100 per cent at the first moment, because where there are areas we can more easily get information, within the confines of the law, we should do it first. And slowly and slowly, we address the difficult cases. I've already seen strong commitment and goodwill amongst all departments and bodies concerned to find a way to address this problem as soon as possible. The Labour and Welfare Bureau will work hard on this and have this database created as soon as possible so that we can build it up. We can build it up, and add to the database as we collect more information because I think society has a very common understanding that for those hidden cases, we should do our best to help them. And of course, all the 18 districts will do their best, including district councillors, Care Teams as well as departments and bodies responsible for offering assistance in this area.

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