

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (November 20):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, will the Government consider and review the current rule so that gatherings won't only be limited to Sundays or public holidays in the civic square. And also a second question, in light of the drop in ranking on the world talent ranking, what is the Government going to do specifically to make sure that it will not continue to drop?

Chief Executive: Let me just recap that the re-opening of the East Wing Forecourt of the Central Government Offices was a decision made by me upon taking office last July. That reflects my intention and my sincerity to allow members of the public to come into the Forecourt to express their views on government policies or other social matters. But since this is a government property and there are a lot of things happening in this building, we have to strike a balance in ensuring the smooth and efficient operation of the government offices at the same time. So we have devised a scheme and introduced certain guidelines. Now, in the light of the court judgment on the judicial review case, first thing we will do is the relevant departments together with the Department of Justice will carefully study the judgment and then decide on the next step. The second thing is I have already asked the Director of Administration to revisit those guidelines and mechanism to see whether there are ways, in light of the experience in the last year, that we could change or relax some of the requirements. As soon as we have a decision, we will let the public know.

As far as talent ranking, I'm not too worried about this drop in the ranking because there are a lot of factors in international rankings of this nature and I have yet to find out the so-called cut-off date of the information as a basis for the ranking, because it might capture a situation a year ago, so it will not have reflected the extensive investment we have made in education in this term of the Government. In response to your enquiry on what sort of specific measures, actually we have rolled out quite a few of these specific measures already. One is to continue to invest. You have heard me saying this many times that spending in education is the best investment that the Government could make, because it would nurture talents to meet the needs of the economy in future. So, we will continue to invest in education.

Secondly, we will have to review the existing arrangements to achieve quality education. On the eight areas that I have asked for review, I think only two or three have finished. Review on curriculum and maybe on teachers' career development are still ongoing. I'll certainly carefully study the recommendations coming out from this review.

Thirdly is to provide students with more opportunities to learn beyond the classroom because in order to be a more creative and innovative talent, you really need to have that sort of broad exposure. So we are spending a lot and doing a lot on promoting what we call "life-wide learning" among students. We are providing internships and exchanges, both with the Mainland and overseas, in order to broaden students' horizon, especially in STEM education. We'll continue to roll out those measures and evaluate their effectiveness. If they are not sufficiently effective, then certainly my government will do more.

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