

## Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (June 27):

Reporter: Two questions. Firstly, because this is your first year in office, could you tell us, how would you rate in the past year your achievements and also inadequacies, if any, under your leadership? And can you share with us your goals for the coming year? And secondly, about the award. You just mentioned the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance. Could you share with us the criteria and the reason for the rescue team to have won this award? Thank you.

Chief Executive: It's almost one year since I assumed the Office of the Chief Executive. My experience and feeling about this year is that there are a lot of things that require us to do. The demand of the work is heavy. But the meaning of the work that I'm required to do is also most important. We have lost three years' time because of COVID, and also because of the 2019 violence and chaos. There are a lot of things we would have liked to do, but didn't do as we wished because of the two problems.

We have to really chase back the time, so the things that we want to do, of course, amount to really a lot. That will mean full commitment by myself and my team, and we will ensure that we will contribute our best – our efforts, our time and energy – to ensure that this is done properly.

All the decisions I make affect everybody in society, so it is a heavy burden, a heavy responsibility that I must discharge very carefully to ensure that decisions I make have taken into consideration all the factors. That is why I emphasise on the need to listen to different views, and I have been accepting views. At the end of the day, of course, I have to make decisions out of the different opinions, but I will take the overall interests of Hong Kong to make the decisions.

My second take on this one year's work is in deciding what to do and how we go forward. It is important that decision-makers are willing to make decisive decisions even if the decisions may not be pleasant to everyone. At the end of the day we need to make decisions, because indecision is the worst outcome. Despite the fact that there may be a lot of times when we roll out new measures and make new decisions, particularly in respect of issues that are controversial, there will be a high chance that we'll have to make decisions even if there are some sectors of the community who may not agree, but I think in almost all decisions by the Government, it will be very difficult to have a matter which receives 100 per cent unanimous decision or opinion. We have to make decisions after consulting, after listening to respective views and then make a decisive decision.

I think people are also very reasonable and pragmatic. When I meet

people in districts, they are very realistic about the fact that some of the problems may not be solved immediately, or they know that even if there is a good intention of the Government trying to solve a particular problem, it will take a process and it will take time. People are being so reasonable. It is important that we explain more why we make a particular decision and explain why we have to consider this as a priority issue and also tell of the remedial measures or the mitigating measures that we are introducing, so that the people know that for the overall interests of Hong Kong, the Government has come to this decision. What does it mean to me? It means that communication and attitude are important. This is the belief that I have and I will continue to do my governance of Hong Kong under that belief.

There are things that I think meet my expectation more. There are things we need to work harder, of course. The things that I think we have matched the expectation higher is in regard to the attraction of talents. We have set a target for attracting 35 000 talents in each year, but in five months we have approved already 49 000 such applications. It's likely that we will be able to meet the target quite a lot.

Of course, I'm glad that the resumption of normal travel with the Mainland and also our connection with the world have brought back the vibrancy, happiness, and economic impetus to Hong Kong. As people saw in the past months, tourism has come back; we have already hit the targets of achieving what we want in respect of tourism. Of course we are somewhat constrained by our capacity, but the capacity is catching up quickly. The 10 million-target of tourists visiting Hong Kong has already been reached in five months. We are positive that growth will continue in respect of tourism and consumption. And they will be the driving engines for growth in the coming year.

We are optimistic that this year it will be a positive growth between 3.5 and 5.5 per cent, which will reverse the contraction of last year. Of course, the economic situation around the world is not bright, and also geopolitical complexity is another challenge, but we have the national development strategies to support our growth, the Greater Bay Area development and also Belt and Road opportunities.

I'm optimistic that consumption and tourism will help boosting our economic performance. In fact, the median income of families has already shown a 2.1 per cent increase in the first quarter. I hope the trend will continue, and I think the trend will continue in the direction of positive upward trend.

In the coming years, of course, the challenges remain on, first of all, land and housing provision. This has been the most challenging task for the Government over the years. We'll have to continue working hard. For the targets I've set in my Policy Address, some are short-term, but most of them are long-term and relate to a five-year period. We have set various targets, and we are progressing, I think, in general positively in respect of all the things that we have promised to do.

Also, I think we need to do more to open up opportunities for Hong

Kong's economic development, so we have to work hard to tell the world of Hong Kong's opportunities. I will be making visits overseas together with Hong Kong delegations. These are things that we'll be working hard. Of course, developing local talents, developing their skills so that the local workforce will be more equipped and more trained, will be another target of the Government in the coming period of time.

In regard to the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance, in my statement I've already described the importance and the purpose of the award is to really encourage government teams or civil servants to do their best, so as to achieve a level of excellence. There will always be the better; there will never be the best, but it is important they will act in accordance with a belief of continuous improvement and with the goal of always striving for excellence. I will use the awardees as examples to tell the civil service what are the things I want them to do. It is through awarding the actual team whose work will tell the exemplary stories of what I would like to promote and I would like the civil service to subscribe to and work to. It is a level of excellence that I want them to take as their day-to-day culture and doctrine. The selection committee of course sets high standards, and these include a level which is beyond general standard. It means a high level of co-operation. It means an attitude for doing beyond what is just basically required. These are all standards that will be taken into consideration in looking at the cases, but the cases will be judged based on their own merits, and based on the circumstances at the time.

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