

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 (March 26):

Reporter: First, I would like to follow up on the garbage charging question. Is the current administration still fully committed to this scheme, or is there any alternative to reduce waste production in Hong Kong? And if there is any further change to this scheme, which has actually been cleared by the LegCo years ago, could that deal a big blow to the Government's credibility because it cannot even hold on its own commitment? And the second question is about, Paul Lam (Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC) has said the Government prepared practical plans if unfriendly actions are taken against Hong Kong after the Article 23 legislation. What are these plans? And what can Hong Kong really do about another country's jurisdiction? And how are you going to convince the West, the businesses that Hong Kong is still a good place for business? Thank you.

Chief Executive: We all know that it is already law for waste charging to take place. Since this is the law, the Government has to act in order to take forward the implementation of the law. That is why we are seriously working out plans, so as to see, as we roll out the measures eventually, what are the things that we need to address. These include something we want to test in the dry run at these 14 locations. We want to, first of all, test how players understand the law and what they anticipate as the challenges as they go through the actual exercise. We want to see how people's behaviour in reducing garbage will be. We also want to know the actual behavioural change of people who produce garbage, of the cleansing staff, of the estate management, and of business operators. Since this is already the law, the Government has to think of a serious way of going forward, but we also are willing to listen to views, and we will pragmatically decide the way forward as we go through the exercise and learn from the experience. Also, after listening to the opinions of the players and also of society at large, we will do this exercise seriously. That is why I have set up an interdepartmental working group under the supervision of the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Warner Cheuk, to monitor, supervise and scrutinise the whole exercise and also the actual results that will be gathered as a result of the exercise. We will deal with all this information in a pragmatic manner and then plan the way forward.

I think a government trying to do a job to ensure it will be smoothly carried out, taking heed of public opinions, creates credibility for the government. It will be too early for us to make any conclusion, but I think a pragmatic government, serious about doing all things after listening to people's views and looking at results, statistics and opinions of the people who are involved, will create the community's confidence in a government that is doing things for their benefits, taking their interests close to its heart

and doing the best to ensure society's interest is best served. It will increase credibility for the government. That is why I want this exercise to be done, and then we can assess the whole thing to plan the way forward.

As regards overseas attacks against the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, which has come into effect on March 23, we know that a lot of overseas politicians and organisations, because of their own political interests and purposes, will continue to attack Hong Kong, and they will continue to attack our law, despite the very fact that their own countries have more stringent laws, have more wide-ranging laws, and have more embracing laws to deal with national security offences. Some countries actually have much harsher laws to protect their own national security. A lot of them turn a blind eye to what we have done, when we have so confidently and openly written the protection and safeguards of human rights and freedoms into our law, which may not be the case in their own countries' laws. They turn a blind eye to all these. Some countries' senior officials, whether former or present, have sometimes taken pride in saying that they lie, they cheat and they steal, and they have full sets of training courses for all these things. When people do all these attacks, think, not just twice but thrice, who are the people who are saying this. In recent cases, we see that there is evidence to indicate overseas politicians have been actively interfering with Hong Kong affairs. The motives of these people are very clear, but we will ensure that we will continue to explain the merits of our Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, which, on the one hand, is a defensive law to protect our own interests, so that people don't dare think about breaking into our house to cause harm to our family members and harm our national security; and we will ensure we inform the community at large, both locally and overseas, that we have stringent safeguards to protect human rights and freedoms, which is the international standard as described in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We have so confidently and transparently written all these obligations and standards into our law.

We will, of course, talk to people in the business sector. We have been doing a lot of briefing sessions to chambers of commerce, both local ones and chambers of foreign countries that are stationed in Hong Kong. We will, of course, during our visits to overseas countries, continue to inform the business sector of the advantage of this law, which is to create stability and security, without which no investments can ever hope to thrive, and that with stability and security, then prosperity may come. We will be informing the business sector, officially and unofficially through our network. We will also be co-ordinating people from different sectors, so that when they are overseas on their business trips, or when they form delegations to do their work, they will tell people of different countries, the business sector in particular, what this law is all about – a defensive law to protect ourselves only, that it has full safeguards for protecting human rights and freedoms, and also, ensuring stability and security means good business opportunities for people to come to Hong Kong. We will continue to do that. I am sure that a lot of people who love Hong Kong are very willing to do the same together with the government team to tell the world the advantages and what you will create as a result of the Ordinance.

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