

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 (April 23):

Reporter: With May 1 Golden Week coming up next week, what arrangements have been made to ensure smoother and more efficient cross-border travelling? And with the first pyrotechnic show happening, what are the expected visiting numbers? And for my second question, is the Government in contact with authorities in Guangdong over flood situations across the border, and what will Hong Kong do to guard against a once-in-a-century rainstorm if heavy rain persists for almost a week? Thank you.

Chief Executive: We have been making comprehensive preparation for the May 1 Golden Week. We estimate that there will be at least 800 000 additional visitors to Hong Kong from the Mainland. We also believe that at our immigration control points, both at the airport and the railway and land crossings, there will roughly be about 5.9 million people going in and out of all the immigration control points. It will be a busy period, but I am very glad to see that the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has long made arrangements to ensure that we have comprehensive preparation, for both the immigration control points' management as well as that there will be good management of tours and also improving services to visitors. The actual arrangements for the immigration control points will be announced when we come nearer to the actual day. There will be special transportation arrangements, of course, to ensure that the experience in Hong Kong, both crossing the boundary or within the travelling between different tourist spots, will be well managed. The Transport and Logistics Bureau and the Transport Department have already been in close contact with the transportation operators.

We will be in full gear to ensure that there will be good and smooth service for visitors. We will also be turning out officers to take care of the management of tourist groups, because we want to spread them out, also to stagger the meal arrangements, so that they will be smoothly absorbed into the whole arrangement at different districts. Of course we want visitors, which of course include tourists, and also maybe as a result of the activities, local spenders to have good experiences in taking meals, in shopping, in all kinds of service businesses. I am glad to see that different operators and different workers in these service industries are already geared up, some with special promotion plans, some with promoting experiences, measures – all rolled out to welcome the visitors. We will make good use of this opportunity to show that Hong Kong is a vibrant city. We welcome tourists. Hong Kong will give tourists good experiences that they will not just enjoy, but when they finish their business, they will tell their friends and neighbours within their home cities.

In respect of the preparation for extreme weather, we know, of course, about the floods that are being experienced in Guangdong. There are good dialogues between Hong Kong authorities and the relevant authorities in different cities of Guangdong. We have, first of all, had good communication with the authorities responsible for possible discharge of water from reservoirs in Guangdong. We have already sought good agreement with them, so that they will give us a lot of advance notice period, such as when they plan for such possibilities, they will give us advance notice. One thing that is very important is that discharge of water from the reservoirs in Shenzhen or nearby cities will not be in any way a cause of any flooding in Hong Kong, because it is a very different system.

Rest assured that we will ensure that we have the right measures put in place to ensure that we will be facing the challenges of extreme weather in a smooth way. The Chief Secretary for Administration, in fact, has already convened an interdepartmental meeting to look at the strengthened measures that we will be taking in anticipation of the coming season of extreme weather attacks. In fact, since last year's experience of the extreme weather attacks, including heavy storms and black rainstorms, there have been all the improved measures already being studied and planned. What I am pleased to see is that the Chief Secretary for Administration has made use of an opportunity to gather all departments concerned to go through all the experiences and strengthened measures to prepare, warn the public for and also to respond and recover from all these potential storms and black rainstorms. I think we will wait for an opportunity to inform the public about the enhanced measures that the Government will take. These measures will include enhanced information dissemination, so that the public will know of the possibility of some challenging attacks that may take place, and also strengthened response plans, strengthened recovery plans, and of course some measures relating to traffic arrangements as well when we come across these extreme conditions. We will announce the details when we have got all these measures fully drawn up in good anticipation of the possible coming of the extreme condition season.

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