

**Response to matters raised by LegCo Members at
Constitutional Affairs Panel Meeting on 17 March 2003**

The Administration's response to the matters raised by Members at the meeting of the Constitutional Affairs Panel held on 17 March 2003 is set out below.

(a) Written Reports submitted by FS to CE

2. The Chief Executive (CE) has agreed to make public the two written reports submitted by the Financial Secretary (FS) on 10 and 13 March respectively. However, as the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs explained at the Panel meeting on 17 March, the two Budget Strategy Group (BSG) papers attached to the report of 10 March contain highly sensitive information and will not be disclosed.

3. Apart from considering the two written reports, before coming to his conclusion, CE also took into account the information in the chronology of events submitted to Members by FS at the Panel meeting on 17 March. Furthermore, CE had sought legal advice from the Department of Justice.

4. Copies of the two written reports, without the BSG papers, are at Annex A.

(b) Declaration of Interest made in ExCo

(c) ExCo Meetings on 5 and 11 March

5. On 18 March, we issued one press statement and the government spokesman issued a reply in response to media enquiries regarding the declaration of interest in the Executive Council (ExCo) relating to the increase of First Registration Tax for private cars. Copies of the two documents are at Annex B. These documents were put to the Legislative Council Secretariat on 18 and 19 March. We have nothing to add regarding the ExCo meetings on 5 and 11 March.

- (d) **Appointment of Independent Investigation Committee**
- (e) **Referral to Department of Justice**
- (f) **CE's Conclusion on the Incident**

6. Before reaching his conclusion, CE had taken legal advice and considered the relevant information and the circumstances of the case in full. The conclusion was set out in his letter of 15 March to FS. In light of public concern, CE decided to make public the letter. CE has given careful consideration to the request for the appointment of an independent committee to inquire into the matter, but has decided, in all the circumstances, not to appoint either a statutory or non-statutory committee.

Chief Executive's Office
21 March 2003

L/M

CE

Perceived Conflict of Interest in My Purchase of a Car

There has been considerable public concern about the perceived conflict of interest in my purchase of a car in January. I am providing below my account of the related events to enable you to consider any necessary follow up action.

2. I am setting out at the Annex a chronology of events relating to consideration of the proposed increase of Vehicle First Registration Tax (FRT) by the Budget Strategy Group (BSG) and my purchase of a car.
3. I should emphasise that I have no intention whatsoever to lessen my tax liability through making the purchase shortly before an announced increase in FRT. Indeed I had not associated my purchase of a car to an increase in FRT until questions were raised by the media on 8 March 2003. The timing of my purchase was dictated solely by the need to have the car ready before my wife gave birth to a baby, expected to be in late February / early March. In hindsight, the sequence of events was indeed very undesirable and the public quite rightly raised questions about a potential conflict of interest.
4. As I said during the press interview on 9 March 2003, I accept that I should have taken precaution to avoid any perceived conflict of interest, and I should not have bought a car at that juncture. To show that I bought a car out of practical needs rather than a wish to lessen my tax liability, I also said that I would donate to a charity a sum of \$100,000, being double the difference in the retail price of the car I bought before and after the FRT was revised.
5. I would also like to clarify two other points which could lead to further misunderstanding.

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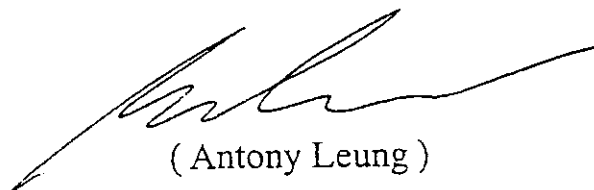
L/M (cont'd)

6. First, I mentioned in the press interview on 9 March 2003 that we decided to adjust the FRT in February this year as a matter of fact. But on reflection, I should also have said that the possibility of an increase in FRT was mooted at the early stage of the preparation the Budget for 2003-04 as a follow up to a review of this tax embarked on two years ago. The subject was first discussed with me at BSG in detail on 31 October 2002, though the final decision was made later in February 2003. I have never had the intention of defending myself using the timing argument, and I fully accept that I should have taken steps to avoid a perceived conflict of interest regardless of the sequence of events.

7. Second, it came to my attention after the press interview on 9 March 2003 that while the difference in the retail price of the car I bought before and after the tax adjustment was about \$50,000, the increase in tax payable in respect of the car was higher at about \$190,000. Although the cost one would have saved through buying the car before the FRT was revised remains to be about \$50,000, I have decided to increase my donation to the Community Chest to double the increase in tax payable, i.e. \$380,000, in order to avoid any suggestion that I was seeking to use a lower figure to lessen my responsibility.

8. I have endeavoured to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this report. But as this is compiled within a very short timeframe, I may need to supplement further information later.

9. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have, and take whatever follow up action you consider appropriate.



(Antony Leung)

FS

10.3.2003

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Annex

Date	Event
31.10.2002	BSG considered paper BSG 9/2002-03 recommending some changes to the FRT tax regime and tax rates. The meeting agreed in principle to the recommendations, which would be subject to further review closer to the Budget Day. (Copy of the BSG paper is at Enclosure 1.)
End December 2002	Having regard to the fact that the two cars owned by me at that time (a Porsche coupe and a Toyota jeep) were not suitable for carrying my new baby, I decided to buy a new saloon car before the expected delivery date of my wife.
18.1.2003	I placed order with Crown Motor for a Lexus LS430 saloon car. In order to ensure delivery of the car before the expected delivery date of my wife, I decided to take the in-stock 2002 model instead of wait for the new 2003 model.
23.1.2003	The car was registered by Crown Motor on my behalf.
25.1.2003	The car was delivered to me by Crown Motor.
11.2.2003	BSG reviewed the FRT proposal as per paper BSG 47/2002-03, and agreed to adopt a new regime and new tax rates higher than those contained in the early BSG paper. (Copy of the BSG paper at Enclosure 2.)
5.3.2003	I announced the proposed revision to FRT in my Budget Speech. On the recommendation of FSTB, ExCo also enacted a Public Revenue Protection Order to bring into immediate effect the new tax regime and tax rates for FRT.

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2

Date	Event
8.3.2003	My Press Secretary received press enquiry about the perceived conflict of interest in my purchase of the car prior to my announcement of a tax increase. I told my Press Secretary to confirm that the car was purchased and it was to fulfill a practical need. After checking with Crown Motor, I also told my Press Secretary that the difference in retail price of the car I bought before and after the tax increase was about \$50,000.
9.3.2003	Following an article in Apple Daily (at Enclosure 3), there was intense media interest on the matter. I did a media interview at about 11:30am to clarify the matter and to indicate my intention to make a donation of \$100,000 to a charity. (A copy of the transcript for my press interview is at Enclosure 4.)

財爺風流 市民折墮

醜聞

阿松偷步買車避稅5萬

正當中產車主及車行為財政司司長梁錦松大加汽車首次登記稅而叫苦連天之際，據本報獲悉，財政司司長原來早在今年一月，就以照料當時尚未出生的女兒為理由，購入價值七十多萬豪華房車，令他避過加稅，節省最少五萬元。立法會議員及學者批評阿松有利益衝突之嫌，市民會覺得梁錦松借內幕消息「墜錢」，結果變成「你就風流，市民就折墮」！

記者：莫劍弦

【本報訊】梁錦松在上周三公布財政預算案中，提出取消汽車設備及分銷商保證豁免，以及擴闊私家車稅階幅度，引入邊際稅制，令到售價車稅率大幅上升，有車主被迫即時「飛定」，更有車行立刻將分行結業。不過本報日前接到投訴，指不斷公開要社會各階層為財爺「共同承擔」的財政司司長，卻第一個做「逃兵」，在加稅前以私人名義購入一輛後志LS430頂級豪華房車。

議員：應向市民交代

本報記者就買車一事接獲財政司司長新聞秘書譚志源要求澄清，他先問記者為何要查問司長私事，當記者解釋收到投訴後，他就作出三項回應：一、承認梁錦松在今年一月初的確以個人名義購入了一輛後志LS430四門房車；二、買車原因是梁錦松目前擁有一輛保时捷及四座吉普車不能安裝嬰兒座位，有需要另買一部房車供新生女兒用；三、承認公布預算案

中有加首次登記稅措施，當日車價是七十九萬，加稅後車價變成八十四萬，差價為五萬元左右。

職工盟立法會議員李卓人批評，問題並非出在差價多少，而是梁錦松身為財政司司長，他對加稅項目有決定權，可是卻完全不避嫌地在加稅前買車，明顯有利益衝突：「市民會覺得他在做內幕交易，用自己內幕消息『搵着數』，你（財政司司長）就風流，市民就折墮！」而且當時他的女兒尚未出世，就算遲一、兩個月才買車也不怕，亦可避免瓜田李下，而且五萬元差不多等於一個綜援家庭半年開支，梁錦松需向公眾交代。

立法會議員張文光批評，若事件屬實，令人震驚，預算案公佈大條增加汽車稅，財政司司長梁錦松作為預算案的負責人，竟然在預算案公佈前的敏感時候買車，他必須向公眾作出合理解釋，否則令人質疑他的誠信。科技大學社會科學部助理馬樹認為梁錦松避稅被指有利益衝突之嫌，一般市民肯定覺得有問題，因為他完全知道預算案內容，馬樹認為梁錦松肯定要向公眾交代。

被指政治敏感度不足

一名曾在庫務局工作過的前任官員也認為，梁的做法實屬不智。他說雖然公務員買車不用申報，但梁錦松作為財政司司長，在一月時已大概已知道要加首次登記稅，為免被質疑利益衝突及引起政治風波，實不應在公布預算案前買車，以往他們處理這些利益衝突問題會相當小心，今次梁錦松不懂避嫌，顯示他政治敏感度不足，他擔心今次事件會令公眾對政府的不滿「火上加油」。



■梁錦松對保時捷仍有興趣，經常一個人駕着這輛超級跑車由官邸返政府總部上班。資料圖片

論墮折

梁錦松認詞不達意

【本報訊】財政司司長梁錦松日前一句「有咁耐風流，有咁耐折墮」引起軒然風波後，他昨早出席電台節目時，為有關言論辯解，強調自己是「番書仔」，詞不達意，當時說話所指的，是當年泡沫經濟及被炒高的樓市。有學者及立法會議員認為，梁錦松解釋牽強，而且事後「補鑊」，難消香港人心頭之氣。

市民質疑理財不力

梁錦松昨早出席商台節目《政經星期六》，為日前所說「有咁耐風流，有咁耐折墮」一語辯解，他說：「可能係番書仔，英文有一句：What goes up, must come down (有升必有降)，如果直譯就係上咗去嘅嘢會跌番落嚟，但因為要做廣東話節目，可能用咗一個唔係幾好嘅翻譯：有咁耐風流有咁耐折墮，當時我係指樓價同泡沫經濟，呢一句好容易俾人聽錯咗，其實係用得唔啱。」

至於他日前於立法會上表示，若二〇〇六／〇七年度後不用再預算案便「謝天謝地」，他也解釋是詞不達意所累：「真係唔好意思，又係詞不達意，所以我

諗可能要去學吓點樣去修辭，點講嘢至得。我意思係到第三屆特區政府經濟調整已經轉好，財政穩健，到時希望可以交到好成績畀下一屆政府，市民亦都會關我啲少啲，咁我梗係謝天謝地。」

雖然梁錦松一再為預算案加稅令市民不快致歉，但還是有市民致電該節目，批評財政預算案加重市民負擔，其中黎小姐說：「政府財赤就加稅，令人感覺將來唔夠錢又再加，咁係咪政府理財不力造成？」

港大政治公共行政學系副教授盧兆興說：「佢雖然盡力澄清佢嘅言論，但市民已先入為主，補鑊係於事無補，尤其係經濟唔好，市民嘅代入感強，印象特別深刻。」

「高官有政治誠信」

理工大學應用社會科學系助理教授鍾劍華說：「佢都係漏住要補鑊，佢點諗有人知，而且『謝天謝地』嘅解釋好牽強。」立法會議員陳偉業說：「市民當日聽到佢講乜，嘅家扭扭嚟講，佢講咗唔認有法啦！可見咗高官有政治誠信。」

民主黨主席楊森表示，正計劃在本月二十三日發起中產控訴大遊行，協助中產人士表達不滿。自由黨主席田北俊昨日出席有線電視訪問時批評，加稅與政府刺激經濟措施背道而馳。



凌志LS430規格

引擎容積 V8引擎4293cc
最大馬力 290匹
設備 Mark Levinson 高級音響系統，全車前後獨立冷氣，Keyless Go 遙控防盜門鎖

資料來源：
凌志汽車網頁及《蘋果》資料庫

曾蔭權也曾爆避稅風波

資料庫



曾蔭權任財政司時曾
因購水貨車惹風波。

其實曾蔭權任財政司司長時也曾在英國買平治運回港，累庫房少收稅款之餘，他卻省回近二十六萬車價，雖然他的做法遭外界批評他有意避稅，也不符合財政司司長身份，但由於一切完全合法，也不涉利益衝突，事件最終不了了之。

購水貨平治省 26 萬元

曾蔭權在二〇〇〇年在英國購入一部全新平治 S320L 豪華房車，由於該車在英國已經「出牌落地」，結果以「二手車」名義入口，入口稅也較新車低很多。當時車價折合港幣僅五十四萬元，再繳付最高百分之六十首次登記稅約二十八萬元，即總共只付出約八十二萬元，較當時該車的「行貨」價一〇八萬元，足足省回二十六萬元。

事後曾蔭權解釋，他原打算駕這部車與兒子從英國到歐洲遊覽，後因行程取消，他在倫敦收車後，就立即把車運返港。雖然輿論批評他做法不符財政司司長身份，但由於現行法例完全容許他這樣做，所以他堅決否認避稅，事件也不了了之。

新聞公報

 寄給朋友 | 政府主網頁

財政司司長答問全文

以下為財政司司長梁錦松今日（三月九日）與新聞界的答問全文（只有中文）：

財政司司長：我想談談我買車的事，我是在年初買了一部車，是凌志 L S 4 3 0 型號，二〇〇二年的款式，向總代理購買，並在一月二十三日登記及使用。我買車是因為有實際的需要，為了接載嬰兒及家人出入之用。我相信大家都會明白作為準家長是會在嬰兒出生前準備一切。我想指出在二月時我們才作出決定調整汽車首次登記稅。根據代理提供的價錢，我買的汽車型號在二〇〇三年的型號款式在稅制調整後的價錢比之前的價錢相差了五萬元。事後看來我當時是應該避嫌，不應在稅項可能調整之前買車，但我的確有這實際需要，買車完全不是為了避稅，為了表白此點，我將會把稅制調整後的車價差額的兩倍，即十萬元，捐給一個慈善機構。

記者：．．．．

財政司司長：這亦不是，我想這是證明我的誠意。

記者：會不會覺得自己在政治方面不敏感？

財政司司長：事後看來我當時是應該要避嫌，不要在當時買車，不過正如我所說，當然是想在嬰兒出生前準備一切，加上近排要應付財政預算沒有時間應付這些問題。

記者：．．．．

財政司司長：事後看來我當時是應該要避嫌，暫不買那車。

完

二〇〇三年三月九日（星期日）

 寄給朋友

L/M

CE

Perceived Conflict of Interest in My Purchase of a Car

Further to my L/M of 10 March 2003, I have examined my records in more detail. On several occasions in the past few days, I updated you verbally on my findings. For the record, I would like to provide you with a further written report to set out the more pertinent supplementary information.

2. As I explained to you, I contemplated buying a new car in end December 2002 in preparation for the arrival of my new baby. I visited a few showrooms in January 2003 and tried to buy a suitable car. My plan was to have the car delivered before the expected delivery date of my wife on 26 February 2003, and before the workload relating to preparation of the Budget continued to increase as we entered February 2003. After making some enquiries and test drives, I decided to buy a Lexus LS 430 year 2002 model on 18 January 2003.
3. I enclose at the Annex for your reference the Order Form, Invoice and Vehicle Registration Document in respect of the car I bought.
4. I take this opportunity to highlight three issues.
5. The first issue relates to the total price I paid for the car. As can be seen from the Annex, I paid \$702,204 in total, made up of \$678,000 for the net price, inclusive of the Vehicle First Registration Tax (FRT) of \$229,620 but after a \$50,000 discount, and licence and related fees and insurance premium amounting to \$24,204.
6. After I became aware of the question from the media about my car purchase on 8 March 2003, I phoned up Crown Motors for the information on the difference in the price of my car before and after the FRT revision. Since the car I had bought was a 2002 model and it had already been sold out, Crown Motors gave me the prices of the 2003

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L/M (cont'd)

model for reference. According to them, the listed price of the 2003 model was about \$790,000 before the revision of FRT and about \$840,000 thereafter. The difference was roughly \$50,000.

7. As I was unable to obtain data in respect of the 2002 model, I told the press in my media interview on 9 March 2003 that my car was a 2002 model, but the difference in listed price of a 2003 model was about \$50,000. Some people have deduced using the latest listed price of a 2003 model that I paid \$790,000 for my car, as against the actual sum of \$678,000. This is not correct because what I bought was an older model with less sophisticated equipment. The listed price of the 2002 model was about \$62,000 lower than the 2003 model before the FRT revision.

8. The second one concerns the discount I got from Crown Motors. The listed price of the car I bought, i.e. Lexus LS430 year 2002 model, was \$728,000. My wife and I first visited the showroom of Crown Motors on 5 January 2003. We were focusing on the model that we first liked, a Lexus ES300, which was readily available in stock. But a salesman told me that the LS430 year 2002 model was coming to stock end and they were doing a clearance sale. The actual sales price could be lower than the one listed. I just took note at that juncture. Thereafter, I discussed with my wife and decided to test drive the ES300. I phoned up Crown Motors two days later and arranged a test drive on 11 January 2003.

9. After the test drive on 11 January 2003, I was not satisfied with the performance of the ES300. Subsequently I made another appointment to test drive the LS430 year 2002 model on 18 January 2003. I did not go for the 2003 model because it would not be available before the expected delivery date of my wife. After the test drive, I decided to buy this model. I recalled that this model was on clearance sale and asked the salesman about the price after discount. The salesman said he would check and revert. He called me later and said that he had checked with his supervisor, and that the company was offering a discount of

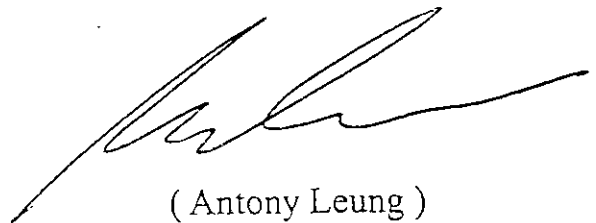
CONFIDENTIAL**L/M (cont'd)**

\$50,000. I confirmed acceptance. I signed an Order Form and paid a deposit of HK\$80,000 by cheque on 20 January 2003.

10. The third issue relates to deliberations in the Budget Strategy Group (BSG). The BSG meeting referred to in para. 5 of the February 2003 paper BSG 47/2002-03 I submitted to you was held on 14 January 2003 (the date 16 January as shown in Annex A to the paper should be a typo). At that meeting, BSG reviewed a list of 18 revenue measures/options, and agreed to review several items including the FRT revision. However, I did not recall this discussion until 11 March 2003 when I went through our file records with my office in greater detail. Therefore, this discussion was not reflected in the chronology of events I submitted to you on 10 March 2003, but it was reported to you verbally on 11 March 2003.

11. I had wanted to clarify in public the above points, as well as some of those points I flagged up in my earlier L/M to you dated 10 March 2003. However, the press was overwhelmed by different estimates and speculations in the past few days. In order not to cause additional confusion, I have decided against releasing further information in a piecemeal manner. Instead, I am compiling a fuller account of what happened for presentation to the LegCo Constitutional Affairs Panel and the public on 17 March 2003. I will also provide you with a copy of this fuller account when ready.

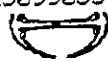
12. As before, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have, and take whatever follow up action you consider appropriate.



(Antony Leung)

FS

13.3.2003



HIND INVOICE

CROWN MOTORS LTD.
 皇冠汽車有限公司
 22/F., Citicorp Centre,
 18 Whitefield Road,
 North Point, Hong Kong
 Tel: (852) 2582 2225
 Fax: (852) 2811 1050

Lexus Wenzhai St
 National Mutual Centre
 151 Gloucester Rd Wenzhai BK
 25119430

097975

NG KIM GENG
 SEASON HILL RD
 NG KONG

Invoice No.: 50141086
 Inv Date : 23/01/2003
 Stock No. : 132159
 Amount No.: 156025
 Order No. :
 Salesman :

Page: 1

ONE Unit : LEXUS LS430
 UTP30R AFAGWVR
 Engine No.:

SILVER M

Chassis No.:

VEHICLE PRICE	382,700.00	T
LICENCE, REG. FEE & TAXES	9,634.00	N
LEXUS INSURANCE (60% NCD)	14,570.00	N
DISCOUNT	-50,000.00	N
AIR-CONDITIONER	31,340.00	E
AUDIO EQUIPMENT	17,170.00	E
FACTORY ANTI-THEFT DEVICE	17,170.00	E
FIRST REGISTRATION TAX	29,620.00	N
EXTENDED WARRANTY	50,000.00	E

ORIGINAL

Trade in:

(0)

HP redemption 0.00
 Less Trade-In 0.00

Subtotal 702,204.00

Deposit ref. 371644 80,000.00
 0 0.00
 0 0.00

Less Deposit 80,000.00

Amount HK\$ 0.00 payable by 0 monthly
 instalment plus 00.000% interest per annum under
 Hire Purchase agreement with InchFoy Credit Corp. Ltd.

Payable
 by InchFoy 0.00

N.B.: This invoice is not valid for use as a receipt under any circumstances.
 The Company's Official Receipt will be given upon payment of this account.
 此發票不可用作收據用，貴公司欲收公司另發正式收據請與經銷商接洽。
 All cheques must be crossed and made payable to Crown Motors Ltd.
 所有支票須作抬頭人與皇冠汽車有限公司。

Balance Payable 622,204.00

CROWN MOTORS LIMITED

Sales Control Manager

H & O. E.



10. Car Phone 汽車電話

Remarks 備註:

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Vehicle Registration Document

車輛的識別
DETAILS OF VEHICLE
02354840

類別
Class PRIVATE CAR

廠名
Make LEXUS

型號
Model UCF30RAEAGKWMR

底盤號碼/車輛類別號碼
Chassis No./V.I. No.

引擎號碼
Engine No.

汽缸容量
Cylinder Capacity (PETROL) 4293 立方厘米 cc

顏色
Colour SILVER

車身類型
Body Type SALOON

類型審核編號
Type Approval No.

車輛尺寸
Dimensions of Vehicle
長度 Length
寬度 Width
高度 Height

許可車輛總重
Permitted Gross Vehicle Weight

最高許可車軸重量
Maximum Permitted Axle Weights

許可組合式車輛總重
Permitted Gross Combined Weight

許可行李艙重量
Permitted Luggage Compartment Weight

登記車主的細節
DETAILS OF REGISTERED OWNER

身分證號碼
Identity Document No.

登記車主的姓名
Full Name of Registered Owner

LEUNG, KAM CHUNG

發出日期
Date of Issue: 24/01/2003

登記紀錄
Transaction: B22-0019

2.0, 26 (Rev. 99)

登記號碼
Registration Mark

出廠年份
Year of Manufacture 2002

原產國家
Country of Origin JAPAN

座位限制 (可根據外)
Seating Capacity (Excluding driver) LD/UD 4

企位限制 (只限巴士)
Standing Passenger Capacity (Buses only) LD 0

首次登記日期
Date of First Registration 23/01/2003

首次登記時的車輛狀況
First Registration Vehicle Status BRAND NEW VEH.

首次登記時的應課稅值
First Registration Taxable Value \$382700.00

已繳付的首次登記稅
First Registration Tax Paid \$229620.00

免稅配件的價值
Value of Tax-exempt Accessories \$65680.00

免稅保養未滿期部份的價值
Value of Unexpired Portion of Tax-exempt Warranty \$50000.00

1980年6月15日以來之前任車主數目
Number of Previous Owners since 15.6.1980 0

登記為車主日期
Date registered as Owner 23/01/2003

牌照條件
Conditions of Licence

附註
REMARKS

登記車主簽名
Signature of Registered Owner

(SUNG HONG)
for Commissioner for Transport

運輸署
(承辦代印)
NO. H 223246

CE's Office Statement

The spokesman for the Chief Executive's Office issued the following statement today (March 18):

"The Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food declared at the Executive Council meeting on March 5 that he had ordered a private car. At the time the car had not yet been registered.

"At the Executive Council meeting on March 11, no Members proposed that the minutes of the meeting on March 5 be amended. However, a Member raised the question as to whether it was necessary for the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food to declare his order of a private car. After discussions, the Chief Executive agreed that as the car had not yet been registered, it was appropriate for him to declare."

End/Tuesday, March 18, 2003

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Government explains Exco Members' declaration of interest

In response to media enquiries about Executive Council Members' declaration of interest, a Government spokesman said tonight (March 18) that the Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, had already concluded that it was grossly negligent of the Financial Secretary, Mr Antony Leung, not to have declared according to the Code for Principal Officials under the Accountability System.

"Apart from the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr E K Yeoh, no other Members declared at the Executive Council meeting on March 5 as the new cars bought by other Members had already been registered. The Executive Council's decision would not have any effect on them," the spokesman said.

End/Tuesday, March 18, 2003

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