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Remarks by SHYA, SLW and SED at media session regarding follow-up work on No. 5 alarm fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po

The Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, and the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin met the media today (November 28) regarding the follow-up work on the No. 5 alarm fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po. Following are their remarks at the media session:

Reporter: Firstly, we just want to ask how would the government go about coordinating the hundreds of millions of dollars of physical donations and also monitoring the donation? How to distribute and also make best use of these donations and resources? And the second question, does the government have the latest information on the number and nationalities of domestic helpers that are missing, injured or dead as a result of this fire, and what will be done to support these domestic helpers, their employers and their families?

Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs: As you see, the Government has already set up a Support Fund (Support Fund for Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po) to support the residents affected by this mega fire. We are consolidating the needs of various households to introduce different measures and schemes to help our affected residents. The first one being the \$10,000 petty cash program which we launched yesterday. Till now, we have received and processed nearly 1,200 applications. Hopefully, we can distribute the money to the residents within these two days. This is the \$10,000 petty cash to each affected household. Apart from that, we understand that each family will face different needs and difficulties during this incident. We are going to provide another \$50,000 living allowance or subsidies to help each household. For this, we encourage all the affected households to register through the social workers of the Social Welfare Department. You can call 182 183 to reach social workers and give them your details and the social workers would process all these applications for you. For those unfortunately deceased, we will provide the families with \$200,000 each, we hope to show our respect to the deceased and help the families in need in this difficult moment. All in all, we will screen and see all the needs and try to introduce more timely measures and schemes to help all those in need.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: Thank you. For foreign domestic helpers, we understand that quite a number of helpers work in this estate, taking care mostly of the elderly people and also children and babies. The Labour Department together with the two consulates, namely the Indonesian Consulate and also the Consulate of the Philippines, arranged a visit to this site to help them identify and understand the situation of missing foreign domestic helpers in this court. So I provide you with the latest number provided to us by the two Consulates.

The Indonesian Consulate confirmed two deaths for Indonesian domestic helpers, one unverified death, two injured, and also 11 of them are missing. For the Filipino foreign domestic helpers, so far we have gathered information from the consulate is one unverified death, one injured, one is reported missing, and also there are altogether 32 in the process of locating them. We are working closely with the two Consulate Generals to help the foreign domestic helpers.

I think there are two major concerns with the foreign domestic helpers right now. One is about the living requirement. In their contract, they have to live in their reported residence. Right now, there is no way for them to get back. We are going to make special arrangements for them to make sure that they are still in compliance with the visa conditions of staying here in Hong Kong. The second is for those who died at the fire. There is already a standard provision in their contract so we will make sure that they will get all the necessary help, including getting their bodies back to either to Indonesia or back to the Philippines. Also, all the death compensation will be arranged in accordance with their standard contract for foreign domestic workers.

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

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