

Transcript of SJ's media session after ACAN meeting

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Following is the transcript of remarks (English portion) by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, after briefing members of the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) at its meeting today (March 27):

Reporter: Can you say something about the work of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse...?

Secretary for Justice: I have just said that the main purpose of the Task force is to study and map out long-term comprehensive and sustainable strategies to combat the youth drug abuse problem. In the past few months, we have already been studying various issues and we have identified some areas. We believe that it is important to take out whatever measures that we can to combat the problem. That is why I have introduced a series of interim or initial measures for the medium and short term. We have secured funding of about \$53 million to cover the interim measures. These measures cover, of course, the promotion and education side, particularly in relation to what we can do in school and through the schools, drug treatment and rehabilitation and various measures that I have mentioned. You can get the details later. The measures are also in relation to research, reinforcing Police intelligence and cross boundary detection and so on. There are two points that I emphasise. These are interim measures. We are still studying the long term measures, including, for example, the question of cross boundary drug abuse that we are all very concerned about, and the feasibility of drug tests. We will be looking into how we can mobilise the whole community to help strengthen the ability of our youth in combating the adversity and all sorts of temptations in a wider sense. Another matter I emphasise is that we are changing the nomenclature of the youth drug abuse problem, in Chinese in particular. In Chinese so far hitherto we have been using "濫藥" which literally means, as some can say, "abusing medicine". This can send off quite misleading message. One is that "medicine" is not "drug". So it's not that big deal after all. Secondly, "濫" means "abuse". If you don't abuse it, if you take it in measures, then that might not be a problem. That again can be very misleading. So we want to change the nomenclature to call it "毒品" "drug", and also help these young people to dispel all these misunderstanding. These are the points that I want to emphasise.

Reporter: Can you tell us how you are going to carry out the hair tests...?

Secretary for Justice: I emphasise that we are still studying this. Just now I mentioned the difficulties, if we want to make it

mandatory, in terms of the legal consideration and also the resource consideration. We are, however, considering the feasibility. First of all, with parental consent, there is a possibility of introducing some schemes. We are taking the example of some international schools into consideration. However, more importantly, we believe that it is important to make the test more available in a voluntary sense or to facilitate the availability of the test, be it in the counselling centres or through the existing channels because our studies and experience tell us that it is very effective. If you manage to persuade a young person who has got a drug problem to undergo some simple tests for him to realise that it has some very adverse effect on him. Then he would realise that it is not something that he could continue with. Then there is greater determination to get rid of it.

Ends/Thursday, March 27, 2008