

Transcript of CE's remarks at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (November 13):

Reporter: During President Xi's speech yesterday, there was this mention of, there were earlier reports saying that, he mentioned that the city needs to be self-conscious when it comes to protecting national security. How would the SAR Government interpret that and how would that affect the way how your Government Administration and the policy direction?

Chief Executive: What the President said about that particular issue, in a way, was no different from what I said in my Policy Address. Unfortunately, I only have a Chinese version in front of me. My Chinese version, paragraph 8 and paragraph 33, attempted to address that particular issue. Paragraph 8 describes the relationship between the Central Authorities and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and I've said therein that for any advocacy of independence of Hong Kong, for any acts that would undermine the national sovereignty, security and development, of course the Government will not tolerate. So that is very much in line with that self-awareness to protect national security. And when it comes to specifically about enactment of local legislation to put into effect Basic Law Article 23, I said in paragraph 33 that although I said previously that we will have to treat this issue very prudently because of previous controversies, that doesn't mean that we will take no action when we have some local existing legislation that could address any acts undermining national security or advocating independence of Hong Kong. And the action taken by the Secretary for Security is a good indication of that determination and self-awareness.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, if the Government did not pressure Tai Kwun over the Ma Jian cancellation, do you take some personal responsibility for this atmosphere of self-censorship watchdogs warned your red line policy would create?

Chief Executive: First of all, I said categorically that the Government had absolutely no involvement in this Tai Kwun incident. I said this once again. I only came to know about this when it was reported in the media, that's point number one. Point number two, by definition, you are referring to self-censorship, so how could the Government be involved in any self-censorship exercised by the individual entities. And thirdly, under the Basic Law, we safeguard freedoms – freedom of expression, freedom of journalism and freedom of gathering, and as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I take that constitutional obligation very seriously, so I would defend those freedoms in a very responsible manner.

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