

Transcript of press conference

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, together with the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang; and the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, held an inter-departmental press conference today (August 26). Following is the transcript of remarks at the press conference:

Reporter: My first question is for Mr Cheung. There is a news report suggesting that over half of the prominent social leaders being invited at the Chief Executive's meeting on Saturday at Government House supported the setting up of an independent inquiry into the social unrest. Will the Government listen and accept the demand? And second question is for Mr Chan. Was the Government trying to prevent people from going to authorised protests in agreeing to suspend some MTR services on Saturday and Sunday? And also will this become a norm in future? And also why did the police have the privilege to use the MTR train service on Saturday when ordinary citizens going about their daily lives were forced to use other transport. And my third question is for Mr Lee. Some police officers were caught on camera to have called reporters and protestors "cockroaches" when they were handling the protests. Is this appropriate and are these officers still fit to carry out their duties on the front line?

Chief Secretary for Administration: Saturday's meeting at Government House was meant to really exchange views on how best if we are going to launch so-called a dialogue platform, how best to proceed and how best to involve the civil community, the civil society as it were. It's not meant to be a discussion on the issues before us. It's a question of tapping the views. It's a brainstorming, tapping the wisdom on how best to take forward the proposition of dialogue instead of confrontation, fostering communication, reconnecting the government with the community in general. That's the objective of the whole exercise.

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I think things do not just happen by coincidence and there must be a reason. If you look back a week (ago), we will notice from many incidents, for example in Yuen Long (MTR) Station, Kwai Fong (MTR) Station and also Tai Koo (MTR) Station, there were a few people who deliberately damaged installations inside, fooled around with fire-fighting equipment, sworn at those staff working inside the stations, and caused chaos, disruptions and safety concerns to passengers and staff inside the stations. As you are aware, the MTRCL had applied to the court for an injunction to stop all these unlawful and violent activities inside the stations. That's why the MTRCL, the police and related government departments, taking into consideration of the marches on Saturday and Sunday, have come together to discuss thoroughly and come up with the decision to suspend some of the stations and some of the services, with a view to safeguarding the safety of the public, the passengers and the staff inside the stations, and also railway safety. The reason why the police had to

travel by train to the related stations to evacuate all those who intruded into the stations was (that) there was simply blockage on the roads. They didn't have any privilege but they were compelled to use the railway to gain access to the stations, as simple as that.

Secretary for Security: Thanks for your question. In the past two months, we can see that the Police had been under a lot of risks, they were in very difficult situations when they were faced with all sorts of potential dangers, including that they had been attacked fiercely by the very violent protesters using different things such as hurling rocks, hurling bricks, using sharp objects and also being attacked by petrol bombs. Under such difficult situations, I would hope that people would appreciate that despite all these risks and dangers, they (the Police) still hold fast to their duty which is to uphold the law and order in Hong Kong, protecting life and property and ensuring that there is no breach of the peace. If people disagree with what they (the Police) have said or what they have done, then of course there is a complaint system for them to make a complaint against any individual case or any individual act. So we will leave it to the complaint system to deal with all these disagreements.

Reporter: My question is about the Police. There is a very popular saying among those protesters that when there is no police, the demonstration is usually peaceful. But when the Police come, it becomes very violent. Do you agree? What is your response to that? Thank you.

Secretary for Security: In the recent spate of events, you can see that after a procession or meeting, then there had been violent protesters who targeted the Police including police stations, including quarters of disciplined staff, including government buildings and including offices that represent the Central Government. So the answer to your question is: a lot of these violent protesters are taking an active role and making an active attempt to actually attack police facilities, government facilities and in particular police officers. As you have seen in the last two days over the weekend, they actually deliberately targeted police officers, mobbing and then using all possibly dangerous means, such as petrol bombs, such as long and sharp poles and weapons, such as strong metal balls so as to ensure that they cause most of the harm to the police officers. So the violence was caused by these violent protesters who deliberately aimed at targeting the people and facilities they want to attack. And most of these people being targeted are police officers or related premises.

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