

Transcript of press conference

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, together with the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, and the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, held a press conference this afternoon (August 12). Following is the transcript of remarks at the press conference:

Reporter: As what Mr Lee just said, we need to investigate the whole thing and many requesting independent commission of inquiry that is not just investigating the Police but also the government officials and the whole situation including the protesters. So why don't you initiate this commission and how do you see the IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Council) are able to do this? And won't it be too late for the IPCC to start investigating Police after they have done all those bloody actions, because people are already getting hurt?

And my second question is also for Mr Lee. How do you respond to protesters who are in range by undercover police when arresting them? Why are the Police not showing their warrant cards even after people requesting during their arrest? Did you allow them not to reveal their identity?

And my last question is for Mr Chan and Mr Cheung. What're your view on the decision by the Airport Authority to suspend all remaining flights in and out of Hong Kong given that the airport operation was smooth during the three day sit-in protests last week?

Secretary for Security: Thank you for your questions and I will answer my part first and I will pass on. First of all, we have this statutory body which is Independent Police Complaints Council, which has been doing complaints against Police in accordance with its legal set up and its legal power. The IPCC has been dealing with complaints of this nature since its establishment. And there have been occasions where actually cases will be brought to the court. So I believe in its effectiveness. The second thing is the IPCC has already indicated that they will do something which is special in examining all the possible evidence in this case, which is not something they will usually do, which indicates their seriousness in handling this matter. As far as I have understood from the IPCC through public release, they actually will be inviting evidence from all sources and this is something that they are doing specially for this case. From all sources, that means even if the source is unproven, they will still examine it. And it is going to be a thorough and impartial investigation by the complaint system, which will be monitored by the IPCC. And we have this system which is established under the law. The IPCC has indicated that they will also make their study, a report to be submitted to the Chief Executive who has asked for the report to be made public. And it will be only after a thorough investigation is completed, then we will see the full picture.

In regard to your second question, it is not up to me to talk about the

deadline because the IPCC operates independently. And I have learned from the IPCC public release that they will try their best to finish the report in six months. But of course, that time frame, according to the release by the IPCC, was to deal with the incidents after the 9th of June up to the 2nd of July. And I have also heard one of the vice-chairmen indicating that it is likely that the scope and the period of the study will be expanded. So I will respect the IPCC's independence and its operation.

Reporter:IPCC?

Secretary for Security: Can you let me answer your full question before you throw in the third, otherwise I think I will lose track.

The thing is it is a system that is established under the law, and it has operated with the result which will see cases brought to court if some substantiated complaints are made. So this is a system that I think the IPCC will ensure that in all these incidents of complaints, then they will be handled thoroughly and impartially.

Regard to your question about there are people already injured in this series of incidents, indeed it is because of violence, because of people openly defiant the law that has caused confrontation, that has caused the Police who have to deal with it in accordance with the law. If there is no attack on the Police, if there is no use of violence, of course there is no need for the Police to resort to the use of force. And I have mentioned repeatedly that there is a particular group of people, who are now involved in strong tendency of serious violence and a kind of acts that they have been doing are really very dangerous. Some of the actions they have taken, and some of the instruments or weapons they have used can be deadly. And you can see petro-bomb being thrown, you can see fire being set, you can see people being dragged out of the car because of opposite views. So this is sowing the sea of terror which I think the Police must deal with. And I think in this context, we have to understand why the Police had to take the actions that it needed to take. They are trying to do their action with the minimum degree of injuries. That is why they have to use tear gas. And that is to maintain a safety distance, so that there is no large-scale confrontation. And the amount of force they are used are non-lethal weapons. If you compare their gear, their equipment, with those overseas, then you will see that the kind of gear and the kind of weapons they used are relatively of a less degree of force and the method they have been deploying had been taken into consideration of reducing the amount of injuries. So stop the violence, do the protest in accordance with the law as Hong Kong has been doing in the last 22 years, and then we can return to normal and deal with business in the normal way.

Secretary for Transport and Housing: The Hong Kong International Airport has been operating since 1998. In the past 21 years, the airport was only suspended for reasons of typhoon. If I don't remember wrongly, the other occasion was due to collision of a vessel with the bridge. The incident today is obviously an act with the deliberation to disrupt normal airport operations. The reason to suspend it from operation is very trivial. Firstly, (it is due to) the chaos arising from traffic congestion caused by protesters

who drove their cars to the airport and block the road. More importantly, it's about aviation safety, personal safety of the passengers, and all staff members who work in the airport. These are the reasons why we have to suspend the operation of the Hong Kong International Airport. We don't want to suspend it. The Hong Kong International Airport is one of the safest airports, one of the most efficient airports, and what have been done today has seriously harmed the reputation of Hong Kong as well as the Hong Kong International Airport. Therefore, I would like to appeal once again to all those who are now demonstrating in the Hong Kong International Airport to leave peacefully as soon as possible so that the Hong Kong International Airport could resume operation as quickly as we can, and to restore the lustre of the Hong Kong International Airport as much as we would love to have.

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