

Transcript of remarks by Acting CE at media session before ExCo meeting (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (October 22):

Reporter: I have two questions for you. On Chan Tong-kai's case, in the event that Taiwan refuses to accept Chan, does the Hong Kong Government have any plan B at all, like would the Government take other measures to ensure that he can be prosecuted in Hong Kong? For example the Bar Association have called for amendments to be made to try Hong Kongers who committed crimes locally, would the Government consider this as a plan B? If not, how can the case or the victim's family ever get justice? And my second question is – on July 21 in the Yuen Long attack, about 100 men were involved in attack, injured at least 45 people, and right now only about 30 of them were arrested and six of them were prosecuted. Last week when you said people should look forward, some internet users or victims questioned whether you have considered that they have been traumatised in the attack, and if you were involved in the attack – if you were attacked – would you say something like that? Does the Government's remark show that the Hong Kong Government really lack empathy for the victims? Thank you.

Acting Chief Executive: For the first question I hope the scenario you painted earlier on, that is the Taiwan authorities refuse completely would not happen. As I said earlier in my Chinese reply, I really appeal to the Taiwanese authorities to tackle the matter with common sense, with compassion. And also, this suspect is wanted by the Taiwan authorities. In fact the order would be valid for 30 years. In other words, we are talking about somebody who is willing to surrender himself and get back to Taiwan to face trial and also of course to ensure justice is done. I think it's common sense that we should accede and try to provide every facilitation on that score. So I really want the Taiwan authorities, hope that they won't complicate a simple issue, and also don't use politics, really, do not try to exploit politics in order to achieve certain gain at the expense, particularly, of justice. It's very important with that point in mind. So at the moment we still hope that a breakthrough could be found, i.e., the gentleman, the suspect, could be returned to Taiwan as soon as possible.

Reporter: ... any contingency plan? I'm fully aware of what you said in response to Chinese questions. But what is the contingency plan? Would you consider the Bar Association's previous suggestions?

Acting Chief Executive: Well, as I said, the Department of Justice and the Security Bureau have examined thoroughly all possible options, alright? And in fact that's the best option available at the moment because the gentleman

concerned is willing to go back to Taiwan of his own free will and this is really a win-win situation for everybody. We should go for it.

Your second question about events on July 21, as I said earlier on, the Independent Police Complaints Council is already looking in earnest into the whole saga, the social events since June 9, alright? And in fact the whole thing is evolving. But the Council has agreed to particularly focus on these major events, like July 21, August 31 incidents, because of widespread public concern. That's why the point I mentioned about looking forward. It's because it's in the hands of a competent independent statutory body, independent watchdog looking at the matter, and justice will be done at the end of the day because the report will be submitted to the Chief Executive and then will be fully made public, so transparency and accountability there. The point I was making there was purely, let's leave it in the matter of the IPCC. I'm fully aware of the feelings, the sentiments of those affected. Of course, I fully understand the sentiment at all, you know.

Reporter: Can you talk about the contrast that we're seeing with the Government's and the Police's handling of the mosque incident on Sunday? And yesterday was the Yuen Long attack three-month anniversary. So far, three months onwards, the Government, no senior officials, no police officers have ever visited those people who were injured in the Yuen Long attacks, whereas on the mosque incident, police officers, police representatives, visited the mosque just hours afterwards. And also, the Chief Executive and Police Commissioner visited the mosque a day after. So why is this contrast? What's barring the Government, senior officials, from visiting those who are injured in the Yuen Long attacks given that it was the Police who failed to protect those citizens? And my second question is, you mentioned that the responsibility lies in the IPCC to bring justice. Isn't that the Police's responsibility to bring those people, the culprits of the attacks, to justice? They are supposed to investigate and arrest those people who attacked innocent citizens indiscriminately in Yuen Long. Thank you.

Acting Chief Executive: First of all, the first question is, there is no question of any discrimination at all when it comes to, you know, visiting the mosque. In fact, the whole idea is to underline Hong Kong as an inclusive society. We do respect particularly religious freedom in Hong Kong. This is very important core value of Hong Kong. We don't want to send a wrong message because of that incident that, you know, we are not mindful of the importance of religious freedom so there is a different objective here. We don't want any misunderstanding. Particularly, we've got a large ethnic minorities population in Hong Kong. We are a cosmopolitan community, right? So don't over-read into the whole thing. We are not discriminating against anyone. We are now doing it on a proper footing, and in fact we don't want any misunderstanding to perpetuate and ferment. So point number one.

Point number two, we are also aware of the sentiments of the people in the community, that we want Hong Kong to be a harmonious community. Ethnic minorities, they are part of Hong Kong's human landscape. They are part of us. So there is every reason why we should make sure that there is no misunderstanding among residents of different ethnic origins in Hong Kong – a

very important point to keep Hong Kong going as an international city.

The second question, talking about IPCC. Of course, IPCC is playing a very important role, a singularly important role, as a watchdog and also at the same time it will come up with a full report, re-enacting all the scenarios. They've been conducting interviews and also collating a lot of information, evidence. So, just be patient. Looking ahead, moving forward, by the end of this year, as the CE said over the weekend, we expect a first report from the IPCC, and the report will be made entirely public, transparently. All right?

Reporter: My question was that what's stopping the Government, from senior officials, from visiting and apologising to those who were injured in the Yuen Long attacks on July 21? And also, so are you saying that the public should expect the IPCC to bring those attackers to justice?

Acting Chief Executive: No, no, no. What I'm saying is the IPCC's role is really to look into the incident, each and every incident, of course, as I said reconstructing the scenarios, and also provide a report, a study, for the Government to act on. But the IPCC also has experience in the past to bring people to justice, you know, those responsible to justice. They've got examples in the past and I don't want to quote that example. You know what I'm talking about. So that's why we leave it in the hands of the competent IPCC. They are doing a good job. We must give them time and space to finish their job, come up with the first report by the end of the year. All right?

Reporter: Visit those who've been injured ...?

Acting Chief Executive: We certainly can't possibility visit everybody there, but for every single incident, as I said, we do show our concern. That is, July 21 event, for example, you know, we are very worried, conscious of the sentiment, of the feelings of those affected. That's why, the earlier we get the IPCC report out is the better, OK?

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