

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

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

Reporter: The police fired tear gas at the Kwai Fong MTR station on Sunday and almost caused a stampede in Tai Koo station by shooting protesters at very close range. Many residents including young children and elderly people were tear-gassed. Can you tell the citizens of Hong Kong how they could continue to live in the city safely when the police keep firing harmful chemicals into residential areas?

Chief Executive: The police have had a very difficult time in the last two months to enforce the law and to ensure law and order in Hong Kong. As everyone will observe, they are under extremely difficult circumstances. As I have just explained, police operations could not be determined by someone like myself who is outside the police, especially when policemen have to make on-the-spot judgment of what will be in the best interest and the safety of people around during that particular situation. The police have their code of practice to follow. The police have very rigid and stringent guidelines in the use of appropriate force and that requires the lowest level of force in dealing with those situations. And I believe ...

Reporter: Mrs Lam, can you tell me what is your responsibility? You are talking about the responsibility of the police and the people of Hong Kong. What is your responsibility as the leader of Hong Kong to solve this situation? Don't talk about the police and the people. What is your responsibility?

Chief Executive: Sorry. It is not my choice to concentrate on the police but all the questions now have been focusing on the police despite a three-hour press conference yesterday. Let me briefly give a very solemn and serious response to that question about the Chief Executive's responsibility. The Chief Executive's responsibility is to ensure that Hong Kong remains a safe and orderly and law-abiding city. That is my utmost responsibility. Because without the rule of law, without law and order in Hong Kong, it is extremely difficult to ensure that seven million people in Hong Kong could continue to live in a peaceful manner. So that is my utmost responsibility. That also requires my support for all the law enforcement agencies in accordance with their policies, their rules, their guidelines. That also means that my responsibility goes beyond this particular range of protests. I have said, after the violence has been stopped, and the chaotic situation that now we are seeing could subside – I wouldn't say it will be eradicated totally – I, as the Chief Executive, will be responsible to rebuild Hong Kong's economy,

to engage as widely as possible, to listen as attentively as possible to my people's grievances and try to help Hong Kong to move on. That is my very serious political commitment and responsibility to the people of Hong Kong at this point in time.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, you say that it's your utmost responsibility to restore order to Hong Kong. Is it not also your utmost responsibility as Hong Kong's leader to listen to the public? All of us here in this room, all the reporters, we've been out on the streets, we've spoken to protesters over the past couple of months. They have made their demands very clear. Now, I would like to ask you, in terms of withdrawing the bill, using this specific term which the protesters have called for, do you as Hong Kong's leader have the autonomy to decide to withdraw the bill? Yes or no? Or is this something that Beijing has to approve as well? In other words, have your hands been tied by Beijing in not allowing the bill to be withdrawn or is this a point of political pride on your part in not doing this and refusing to meet this demand of the protesters? Yes or no? Specific response.

Chief Executive: Well, actually, this question has been answered on previous occasions. Number one, as we have all heard from the spokesman of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, the Central Government is still confident that I, myself, as the Government of the Hong Kong SAR, together with the police force, are still capable of resolving this crisis. The second point I want to make is in response to the various demands that we have heard, we have considered all factors and came up with the response that we have rehearsed time and again over the last two months. Thank you very much.

Reporter: Do you have the autonomy or not to withdraw the extradition bill? You have not answered the question. You've evaded the question. Please, Chief Executive. Do you have the autonomy to withdraw the bill or not, or does Beijing need to give approval on that?

Chief Executive: I have already answered the question.

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