

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 (June 12):

Chief Executive: Let me repeat what I said in English. The problems associated with the steel works in the platform of the Hung Hom Station under the Shatin to Central Link project as reported by the media in late May have attracted widespread public concern. As it concerns public safety, I have decided to appoint a commission of inquiry under the Commissions of Inquiry Ordinance, that is Chapter 86 of the Laws of Hong Kong, to conduct an independent and comprehensive investigation.

Under the Ordinance, the commission is to be appointed by the Chief Executive in Council, which will also determine its composition, its terms of reference etc. We will consult the Executive Council on the matters as soon as possible. At this stage, we believe that the commission should examine the cause and assess the extent of the problems. The commission should also, having regard to the problems, review the works supervision system of the MTR Corporation as well as the mechanism under which the Government monitors and controls such works, with a view to making recommendations to safeguard the quality of works as well as safety.

I'm pleased to say that with the full support of the Chief Justice, Mr Geoffrey Ma, we have already obtained the agreement of the former Non-Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Justice Michael Hartmann, to head the commission of inquiry if so approved by the Chief Executive in Council. As you may remember, Justice Hartmann was the Chairman of the Independent Expert Panel set up by the Government in 2014 to review the project delay relating to the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, and is hence well versed in railway-related matters in Hong Kong. We hope that the commission can submit its report in about six months' time after its commencement of work, so that the truth can be unveiled as soon as possible.

Reporter: What is the rationale behind forming a commission under Cap 86 with the power to subpoena? What is the rationale behind forming the commission with the power to subpoena? Is it because the main contractor Leighton has so far said nothing about the incident? Also, with regards to Fanny Law's chairmanship with the Science Park, reports say you have a hand of her exit from the Park. What do you have to say about that?

Chief Executive: Why did we decide to go for a statutory commission of inquiry as provided under Chapter 86 of the Laws of Hong Kong is – one is

this is an issue of major public concern because it concerns public safety. Secondly, it is under the Commissions of Inquiry Ordinance that the commission will have all the necessary powers to obtain information to summon witnesses to attend and appear before the commission, and also to ask for disclosure of documents. So, we feel that given the severity of this particular incident and the likely parties involved, going for a statutory commission with all the powers that I have mentioned is an appropriate approach. You may recall that in the last term of the Government, the two incidents of similar public concern – one is the Lamma boat collision, the other is the discovery of lead in drinking water in public housing estates – were also subject to statutory commissions of inquiry.

As far as the appointment of Mrs Fanny Law as Chairperson of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, you used the words "I have a hand". Well, all these important appointments are made by the Chief Executive, so I don't know what do you mean by "I have a hand". I have to agree or disagree with appointments to important committees, especially positions of chairman. At this point in time, because the Government has not announced the next round of appointments to the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, I cannot offer comments directly to what you have asked. But I can say, and I want to say this – that Fanny has been a very dedicated Chairman of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation. In her four years of service she has provided the leadership to lay a very strong foundation for us to now take forward the innovation and technology policy blueprint that I have announced in October last year in my inaugural Policy Address, and because of my personal commitment to innovation and technology, Fanny is perhaps the ExCo member that I appeared most often together with in attending functions of the innovation and technology industry, and she is still serving and will continue to serve on the Executive Council.

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