

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session today (April 14):

Reporter: Thank you, Mrs Lam. Just on its comments from the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, you said there was no question of interference, but it was a little bit more than a comment, there was also a very strong accusation that the lawmaker had committed misconduct in public office, so can you just clarify why you don't consider that to be interference? Secondly, is your administration under pressure from Beijing to bring this whole House Committee saga to an end? And finally something from Dennis Kwok's press conference just now, he was saying that there is a lot of political mistrust in Hong Kong. Are you worried that this will make things more difficult or sow the seeds of more, sort of, erosion of trust at this very delicate time?

Chief Executive: Three questions. First of all, about the public comments made by the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office and the Central People's Government Liaison Office in Hong Kong, I want to refute categorically any accusation that such comments made by the two offices constitute interference, especially when some critics referred to Basic Law Article 22. I see no ground for that sort of accusation. As I have explained from the constitutional perspective, one have to fully understand that under "One country, Two systems", through the system and through the Basic Law, the Central Authorities have given Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy, but that doesn't mean that the Central Government has given up its power and authority on Hong Kong affairs. The Central Government has always been very supportive of Hong Kong SAR Government's work in terms of improving livelihood and also promoting Hong Kong's economic development, so when they see this very bizarre situation, when the Legislative Council is almost malfunctioning because the House Committee has not been able to elect a chairman for over six months, I find it only legitimate for them to express their concern. There's absolutely no ground for accusation of interference by the two offices. As to exactly what wording they use, this is really not the crux of the matter. The crux of the matter is the two offices have expressed serious concern about the malfunctioning of the Legislative Council, which naturally undermines the governance in Hong Kong. That brings me to my second perspective. If you look from the governance perspective, the Legislative Council has very clear functions under the Basic Law, including the making of legislation, the receiving of complaints from the people of Hong Kong, a debate on the Chief Executive's Policy Address, and many of these functions have not been discharged since October last year because of the way that someone has handled the election of the House Committee Chairman and this has gone on for six months. This is really unacceptable. That means it will certainly affect the things that we want to do and which we are doing for the people of Hong Kong. Thirdly is from the operational level. I don't want to repeat all the figures that I have shared with the public in Cantonese, but

it is for all to see that after a period of malfunctioning, a lot of government business, especially in legislation, has been held up by the House Committee not having its proper function and operation for so long, and many of these legislation have direct impact on Hong Kong's economic development and the livelihood of her people. This is a very unfortunate event and a very undesirable phenomenon, which we should all try to rectify as soon as possible.

As far as under pressure, there is no pressure whatsoever, because I want to exert pressure on the Legislative Council and I have been doing it in a very nice and polite way throughout the last six months by making public comments when we are about to put a resolution to the Legislative Council to lead to the confirmation of the Chief Justice appointment. But whether some Legislative Council Members will care about all this pressure is nothing for me to decide or comment. I just hope that people of Hong Kong understand the current situation that it is really very detrimental to the normal operation of government work.

As far as the third point, I don't want to comment on a particular comment by one of the Legislative Council Members. The difficulties of governance in Hong Kong are for all to see. I would say that the Hong Kong SAR Government would have a much easier life in this anti-epidemic work if we have more cohesiveness in society, more unity, more solidarity, putting aside our political differences for the time being in order to help Hong Kong to go out of this epidemic as soon as possible. Everybody should reflect on the situation that we are now in.

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