

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Nam Pak Hong Association 150th anniversary ceremony this evening (August 8):

Reporter: Why do you insist that Fred Ma should stay, because a company certainly can do without one man and shouldn't he also be responsible? And secondly, why should Transport Secretary Frank Chan stay too? Should he be accountable for this whole incident surrounding the Shatin to Central Link?

Chief Executive: Well, I understand that in some quarters, whenever an issue like this happens, people want all the heads to roll, but we have to be reasonable and take the appropriate actions. I have explained at length that when we talk about responsibility and accountability, there are different levels of responsibility and accountability.

In this particular incident, the director or the project director and the works team have the most important responsibility that they have to shoulder, and that's why we are very decisive in taking actions on that front. But as far as the senior management is concerned, because there is division of labour within a company, the senior management perhaps could have done better in terms of monitoring, especially after the incident has hit the news. They have been given a period of time to produce and submit report to the Hong Kong SAR Government, the senior management should have exercised an even higher level of diligence and vigilance to ensure the accuracy of the report. So Mr Lincoln Leong has also taken responsibility for that.

Then finally is the Chairman and the Board of the MTR Corporation. I have a look at the facts and asked my government directors on the MTR Board. They have been kept in the dark. They have performed their role in asking a lot of questions from the management, especially the project team, but they have been kept in the dark. My consideration is based on this sort of analysis of responsibility and accountability. But practically, the MTR Corporation is a very sizeable company. It has several business areas. One is of course the projects, the railway projects. The other is operating railway every day, transporting 5 million of passengers on a daily basis, and they have the property side as well. For such a big company to have all these senior people leaving at the same time would not be a very sensible proposition. So despite Mr Fred Ma himself wanting to take accountability for this matter and step down, I have invited him and persuaded him to stay for a while in order to help us to undertake the various functions.

As far as the Secretary for Transport and Housing, the considerations are very much the same. He is also a member of the Board, and I think the government directors have also exercised their diligence in scrutinising the

work of the project team and asking questions. In terms of a monitoring role, of course the Highways Department is assisting the Secretary for Transport and Housing in monitoring and the discovery this time that we could come out to tell the public about is part and parcel of that effective monitoring.

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