

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at a media session after the LegCo meeting today (May 29).

Reporter: The protest organised by the legal sector, does it highlight that the bill is still controversial and that there's not ...?

Chief Secretary for Administration: Sorry, the protest is by the ...?

Reporter: Legal sector. The legal sector is holding a protest on June 6th.

Chief Secretary for Administration: Well, I'm not going to comment on individual procession. Hong Kong is a free society. We respect freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, so I'm not in a position to comment individual organisations on what they propose to do.

But the point I want to make is that we are doing it for a very good reason. We are doing it (amendment bill) in the interest of Hong Kong. We've noted the concerns of the community and we've taken all these into account. As the Chief Executive said, we are in the course of listening to the views and feelings from all sectors. We will respond to the views and concerns expressed over the last few days on a holistic basis rather than on a piecemeal basis. Government will respond to all the points raised, suggestions put forward. If they're viable, if they're constructive, if they're conducive to easing public concern, the business community's concern, and providing that are practicable and also fulfil the two objectives of the bill, that is, handling the Taiwan murder case on the one hand and filling the void in the current legal regime on extradition on the other, then we are prepared to consider them carefully.

Reporter: Mr Cheung, according to a Reuters report today, the report suggested that some judges are very worried about the extradition bill because they worry that it would put them on a collision course with the Mainland government when they hand down judgments on the extraditions. When they themselves are worried about the extradition bill, how can the Government say that, you know, they could be the guardians when the bill is passed?

Chief Secretary for Administration: First of all, I'm not going to comment on the Reuters report, and, in fact, judges should not comment on political issues. If you remember what the Chief Justice said at the opening of this legal year, it's inappropriate for any judges to comment on political affairs, particularly on cases which may appear before them in future. This is point number one.

Point number two is that Article 85 of the Basic Law clearly stipulates

that judges of Hong Kong courts exercise judicial power independently and free from any interference. That's a very important point to bear in mind. Absolutely apolitical – not political at all, it's entirely an apolitical judiciary. "Fiercely independent" is the right adjective to describe our court system here in Hong Kong.

Another thing is, in fact, over the last 22 years, our courts already have experience in handling a number of extradition cases, so we've got experience in the courts. The judges know how to deal with the cases before them. So we've got expertise, professionalism. I'm sure that our judges can handle all these cases coming up in future with professionalism and with their skills as well. And in fact, there are cases where requests for extradition were rejected by the courts because of a lack of evidence, so don't take it as read that the courts would automatically say yes. They will scrutinise it carefully, look at the law, the precedents and facts and so on. OK?

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