

S for S speaks on Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at a media session after the Bills Committee on Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 meeting at the Legislative Council (LegCo) today (April 30):

Reporter: What do you think of the failure again to elect the chairman for the Bills Committee? Secondly, I understand that the Government wishes to have this proposal to be discussed in the Bills Committee, but is the Government prepared to table directly the bill to the Council, given the urgency of the matter?

Secretary for Security: Obviously, I think the proper procedure is to go through the Bills Committee so that there will be a good exchange of opinions and a good opportunity for the Government to explain all the legal principles and policies that we want to achieve in our bill. That is something that has been done in respect of all bills and this is a procedure we want to follow.

There may be different opinions by a lot of people, but for legislators who have different opinions it is best to express all these opinions in the Bills Committee so that they can make proposals, or at the end of the day they can also make amendments to the Government proposal. There are a lot of things that should be done in the Bills Committee so that the due process can proceed so as to address the two purposes we have all along been explaining that the bill wants to achieve. The first is to deal with this murder case in Taiwan and the second is to plug the loophole, which is something that has been exposed and proven by the Taiwan case because, indeed, a similar case as serious as the Taiwan case may happen anytime and at anyplace. We just don't have the legal basis to deal with them. Certainly, we can't afford to have other cases right in front of me when we have the same problem of not being able to deal with them on the legal basis. So I sincerely urge the Legislative Council and the Bills Committee to start the process of scrutinising the bill, and discussing and exchanging opinions with the government team. We will do our best to explain the purposes on the legal basis, and of course we do our best to ensure that the whole legislative process will complete before the end of this Legco year so that we have the legal basis to deal with the Taiwan murder case as well as to ensure that we will also be able to deal with similar cases in the future.

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