

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 (March 19):

Reporter: Previously you said you hope our new MTR leaders can restore public confidence in the company, but public confidence was again shaken yesterday. Are you very disappointed about it, and is there anything the Government can do about the situation? And many business leaders have raised concern about the proposed changes to the extradition laws. Are you worried that Hong Kong's business environment will be undermined by it?

Chief Executive: First of all, on the performance of the Mass Transit Railway corporation (MTRC), I think to be fair, we have to acknowledge that the Mass Transit Railway corporation has been providing reliable and efficient service to Hong Kong people for almost four decades, and this is now a very huge railway network that will require a lot of attention and continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure its continued safety and efficient operation. Earlier on, as a result of the platform problem in the Hung Hom Station Extension of the Shatin-Central Link, I have already appointed an independent Commission of Inquiry (CoI), and as you remember I received an interim report from the Chairman of the CoI, and I hope to be able to release this interim report. Of course, the interim report does flag up issues of concern in project management. We will have to deal with this in a very robust manner in order to restore public confidence in the way that we build Hong Kong's railways, especially railways which are very sought-after by the Hong Kong community.

The incident that has happened yesterday, we have not had the results of the investigation, but apparently it was related to the testing. Fortunately, it was still the testing of the new signal system which has yet to be put in place. So, if problems did arise in the testing, then we still have this opportunity and time to rectify it before putting it in service. I have to say, and I want to reiterate, that public safety is of primary concern, so we will not rush to open the Shatin-Central Link or to put in place this new signal system until we are assured of the safety.

As far as how MTRC under its new leadership, i.e. the new Chairman and the new Chief Executive Officer, will do to restore public confidence and address the problems flagged up by the CoI as well as this investigation on the new signal system, the Government will perform its role in monitoring, regulating, but in a way also trying to work with them in concert, so that we can together help to sustain the good performance of the MTRC that has been serving the community so well over the past 40 years.

Second question about the proposed amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance, the amendments are intended to pursue judicial justice in criminal cases and also to protect public, because if there are serious criminal crime offenders who have absconded and come to Hong Kong, they are a threat to public safety. So we have reviewed the existing legislation and acknowledged that there is a loophole, and the intention of these amendments is to plug the loophole. But you will ask me, with over 21 years after reunification, why now? It's because, one is – I have said this many times – we have been confronted with many problems since reunification and it is my governance style that we should try to find a solution to these problems. Sometimes the solution may be well received, sometimes it may create some anxiety and concerns, and that's why it is our job to explain why we are doing this. The second factor in the timing is because we have a case right in front of us which has caused a lot of public anxiety, a lot of anger, especially amongst the parents of the deceased. So we need to do this expeditiously in order to have the legal framework and the authority to deal with that particular case.

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