

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 this morning (June 10):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, the demands of one million protesters were very clear – they want the bill withdrawn, they want you to step down. How much more clear do you need them to be? Is it that you think you can ignore them so that there would be escalated action, such as people going on strike or even further radical actions?

Chief Executive: First of all, let me say that I and my team have not ignored any views expressed on this very important piece of legislation. We have been listening, and listening very attentively and very humbly, to views expressed by various sectors. We have already made two sets of amendments to our proposals, one before the introduction of the bill and one after the introduction of the bill. The reality is, after these additional measures have been introduced, and many of them concern human rights safeguards over and above what is now contained in the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, we were told, we received feedback, that these additional measures are effective in addressing the concerns of the stakeholders. We will continue to do so. There's no question of us ignoring views expressed in society. But Hong Kong has to move on, there are severe deficiencies and gaps in our existing system to deal with cross-border crimes and transnational crimes. There is a very difficult area to understand – why Hong Kong cannot have any mutual legal assistance on criminal matters with our closest neighbours, that is the Mainland of China, Taiwan and Macao? We have to plug that loophole and rectify that deficiency for the long-term benefit of Hong Kong because nobody wants Hong Kong to be a fugitive offenders' haven; nobody wants to see Hong Kong people committing crimes outside of Hong Kong and then return to Hong Kong as if they have not done anything wrong. So, this work has to continue to be done. As for myself, I have been the Chief Executive of Hong Kong for about two years. I have spent every moment of my time to work for the benefit of Hong Kong – every aspect, it's not just on improving the justice system; it's also on pushing Hong Kong's economic development and addressing livelihood issues, like housing and poverty and so on. I think I will continue to do this in my utmost ability and to address the issues and concerns of Hong Kong people, especially at a time when our economy is going to undergo some very severe challenges because of the external uncertainties. I think it is all the more important for us to have a stable team to rise to the challenges and to resolve many of the difficult areas that we are going to face.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, if I may, one million peaceful protesters came out on the streets yesterday, they want the law to be scrapped. That's unambiguous. They don't want extra safeguards. They have expressed a lack of trust and confidence in the Chinese legal system. Are you categorically saying now at

this moment that you will not consider scrapping the law? And when you took office, you pledged to everyone in Hong Kong that you would heal divisions, that you would express the views of the Hong Kong people to Beijing. Have you attempted to persuade Beijing to postpone or scrap this law in all your meetings including the emergency crisis meeting last night after the protest with Chinese officials?

Chief Executive: First of all, as we have said in the Government's response issued last night, the bill will resume its Second Reading on June 12 and we appeal to members of the Legislative Council to discuss and debate on the bill in a calm and rational manner. I hope that similar appeal will go to organisations in society which may be planning other actions including perhaps some radical actions.

On your second question, I must first correct what you said. There was no emergency meeting with the Central People's Government last night. There was not even an emergency meeting with my team because we have been communicating the whole day, monitoring the situation, so there is no such thing as an emergency meeting with the Central People's Government. You have to substantiate that if you want to make that categorical allegation.

Second thing is this bill is not just about the Mainland jurisdiction. This bill is about putting in place a special surrender arrangement that is a case-by-case arrangement with all the other jurisdictions that Hong Kong has not yet had a long-term arrangement and the number of such jurisdictions that Hong Kong has is a mere 20. So there must be over 170 other jurisdictions that we have no (workable) legal basis to entertain a request for the return of a fugitive offender, somebody who has committed a very serious crime in that particular jurisdiction but has fled to Hong Kong and we can't do anything about it. The same applies to our neighbours, Mainland China, Taiwan, Macao, we can't do anything about it because there isn't any arrangement for the surrender of fugitive offenders, there isn't even any arrangement for mutual legal assistance on criminal matters. This bill is not about Mainland alone. This bill is not initiated by the Central People's Government. I have not received any instruction or mandate from Beijing to do this bill. We were doing it and we are still doing it out of our clear conscience and our commitment to Hong Kong. We want Hong Kong to fare well. We realise that Hong Kong has some major deficiencies which have been criticised by overseas bodies. If you have a chance to look at the Financial Action Task Force, which is coming from the G7, Western democracies, what did they say in their review on Hong Kong on money laundering and terrorist financing? They said we had a significant deficit, which is undermining international collaboration. So as responsible officials standing here, we are duty-bound to address that deficiency. It is not Beijing, but if you care to read the paper that we issued on May 30 to the Legislative Council Security Panel, there were two paragraphs talking about relationship between the Hong Kong SAR and the Central Government. Because in the course of doing this exercise, I realised, S for S (Secretary for Security) realised, that the focus unfortunately or understandably was on the Mainland because of trust issues, because of the differences in the legal systems. So I did reflect faithfully to the Central People's Government about these concerns

and anxieties. And in the additional safeguards that we have introduced, you will notice that some were specifically related to the Mainland, for example, if we need a central authority to trigger that request, that central authority has to be Supreme People's Procuratorate. I can't do this without indication from the Central People's Government that this is acceptable. And then we said that after conviction, if a Hong Kong person prefers to come back to Hong Kong to serve in Hong Kong's prison, because then they would be easier to be visited by families, it needs to amend the ordinance because at the moment the sentenced prisoners return ordinance again excludes the Mainland of China. So I have to tell the leaders that I need that assurance in order to assure the people of Hong Kong. So whatever they did, as I have said in those two paragraphs, which I wrote for him (the Secretary for Security) because I was the person to communicate directly with the Central People's Government, the Central People's Government understands the difficulties and the controversies in Hong Kong and the Central Government supports and respects the views of the Hong Kong SAR, particularly myself, the Chief Executive, and so they have agreed everything in the additional safeguards that concern the Mainland of China.

Reporter: Do you have any plans and intention to delay the process just to communicate better with the Hong Kong people? And what's your message to those outside of Hong Kong watching this development?

Chief Executive: As I have repeatedly referred to what the Government's response said last night, the bill will resume its Second Reading Debate on June 12, and we appeal to members of the Legislative Council and various organisations and groups in society to continue to participate in the discussion in a calm, rational and peaceful manner. Since early February when we first announced our intention to do this legislative amendment after months of research and international study, the intensity of discussion in these four months is quite unprecedented for a bill proposed by the Government. I would say that while we will continue to do the communication and explanation, there is very little merit to be gained to delay the bill – it will just cause more anxiety and divisiveness in society. But once the bill is passed, as I said, we will regularly report to the Legislative Council the implementation of this bill. And after all, if you are in possession of the numbers, every year we are talking about five such cases, because since 1997, the Hong Kong SAR Government has only surrendered slightly over 100 cases, and the majority were to the United States of America. We can explain and account for each of these cases dealt with under the ordinance, especially under the proposed special surrender arrangement, to the Legislative Council. I don't think it is an appropriate decision for us to now pull out this bill because of the very important objectives that this bill is intended to achieve.

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