

Lam pulls back from talk of quitting

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam was at a closed-door meeting with business leaders last week. Audio recordings of her remarks at the event were leaked to the media.



ON HER ROLE

For a chief executive to have caused this huge havoc to Hong Kong is unforgivable. It's just unforgivable. If I have a choice, the first thing (I would do) is to quit, having made a deep apology... So I make a plea to you for your forgiveness.

Once an issue has been elevated to a national level, to a sort of sovereignty and security level... the room, the political room for the Chief Executive who unfortunately has to serve two masters by Constitution – that is, the Central People's Government and the people of Hong Kong – that political room for manoeuvring is very, very, very limited.

ON THE EXTRADITION BILL

(It was meant to) plug legal loopholes in Hong Kong's system. This is not something instructed, coerced by the central government.

... This huge degree of fear and anxiety among people of Hong Kong vis-a-vis the mainland of China, which we were not sensitive enough to feel and grasp.

ON HERSELF

Nowadays it's extremely difficult for me to go out. I have not been on the streets, not in shopping malls, can't go to a hair salon, can't do anything. Because my whereabouts will be spread around the social media, the Telegram and LIHKG (a forum used by protesters to communicate), and you could expect a big crowd of black T-shirts and black-masked young people waiting for me.

ON BEIJING'S POSITION

I will be very honest with you, it would be very naive of me to paint you a rosy picture that things will be fine or I have a deadline. But I can assure you that Beijing does not have a deadline. They know this will ripple on.

Another thing I want to assure you, that is my own feeling the pulse, and through discussions, CPG (Central People's Government) has absolutely no plan to send in the PLA (People's Liberation Army).

They (China) care about the country's international profile. It has taken China a long time to build up to that sort of international profile and to have some say, not only being a big economy but a responsible big economy, so to forsake all those positive developments is clearly not on their agenda.

But they are willing to play it long, they are willing to play it long, so you have no short-term solution. Hong Kong suffers, you lose tourism, economy, you lose your IPOs... but you can't do much about it. But after everything has been settled, the country will be there to help with maybe positive measures especially in the Greater Bay Area.

MRS LAM, AT A MEDIA BRIEFING YESTERDAY MORNING, SAID THE LEAKED REMARKS WERE TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT

I said on several occasions previously and also reaffirmed by my colleagues in the Chief Executive's Office in response to media enquiry that throughout this period – that is from the very beginning till now – I have never, I have never tendered a resignation to the Central People's Government. I have not even contemplated to discuss a resignation with the Central People's Government.

The choice of not resigning is my own choice. If you want to understand, in a private session I just attempted to explain that as an individual, given the very difficult circumstances, it might have been an easy choice to leave. But I told myself repeatedly in the last three months that I and my team should stay on to help Hong Kong, to help Hong Kong in a very difficult situation and to serve the people of Hong Kong. That remains my position.

I was, and am still, very disappointed that my remarks in a totally private, exclusive session, a lunch actually, which clearly is subject to Chatham House Rules, had been recorded and then passed to the media. I think this is quite unacceptable. To further suggest or allege that myself or the Government have any role to play in this (leak) is absolutely unfounded. That point has to be made extremely clear.

