

**Independent Committee in relation to  
the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po**  
**Written Opening Submission of**  
**the Relevant Bureaux and Departments of the Government**  
**(English translation)**

**A. Introduction**

1. This Written Opening Submission is submitted by the Government's relevant policy bureaux and departments<sup>1</sup> to the Independent Committee established in relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po (the "**Independent Committee**"). This Submission aims at providing a preliminary background for the Independent Committee's investigative work (the "**Inquiry**"), briefly setting out: (1) the Government's stance on the Inquiry and how it is facilitating the same; (2) the basic background on the Wang Fuk Court estate and the course of the fire; (3) preliminary observations on the direct causes of the fire and systemic issues falling within item (1) of the Terms of Reference (the "**ToR**"); (4) preliminary observations on the systemic issues of conflicts of interest and irregularities in tendering falling within item (2) of the ToR; and (5) immediate and medium-to-long-term improvement measures taken or proposed to be taken by the relevant Government departments since the fire.
  
2. On 26 November 2025, a serious fire broke out at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po, claiming 168 precious lives, injuring a number of persons and causing severe damage to property. This is the deadliest fire disaster in Hong Kong in recent years and has caused immense grief to all Hong Kong citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Namely (1) the Hong Kong Police Force, (2) the Fire Services Department, (3) the Home Affairs Department, (4) the Housing Department, (5) the Buildings Department and (6) the Labour Department

The Government extends its deepest condolences to all those who perished in the fire, and expresses its most sincere sympathies to the families of all the casualties.

3. This tragedy serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of building safety and fire safety in safeguarding the lives and property of Hong Kong citizens. The Government fully understands that the families of the deceased, the residents of Wang Fuk Court and the public at large all expect a fair, clear and comprehensive account through the work of the Independent Committee. The Inquiry not only aims to ascertain the causes of the Wang Fuk Court fire, but also bears the important responsibility of formulating improvement measures and making recommendations for the future to ensure that similar tragedies do not happen again.
4. The ToR of the Independent Committee cover the following four areas:
  - (1) Term of Reference (1): Regarding the fire broken out at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po, its rapid spread and the resulting casualties and property damage, to examine - the causes and circumstances that led to the fire; the fire service installations and equipment in the buildings, and the supervision and responsibility for their effective operation; whether the construction safety requirements, standards, supervision and day-to-day maintenance regime for the building maintenance and renovation works were adequate; regarding the building maintenance and renovation works, whether the prevailing list of materials meeting safety standards is comprehensive, and whether the related verification and testing systems are effective; the roles and responsibilities of personnel with supervisory roles across all stages (including government officers, authorised professionals,

contractors and others); and the liabilities arising from the aforementioned issues.

- (2) Term of Reference (2): Regarding large-scale building maintenance and renovation works, to examine - whether there were systemic problems such as undue connected interests, conflicts of roles, or improper collusion across all stages of the works; and whether bid-rigging corruption, or irregularities were involved in the tendering process of these works.
  - (3) Term of Reference (3): Regarding the two matters above, to examine whether regulation and penalties under relevant existing laws are adequate.
  - (4) Term of Reference (4): To make recommendations regarding matters in items (1) to (3) above.
5. The above ToR fully reflect the depth and breadth of the Inquiry, demonstrating the extremely heavy investigative burden borne by the Independent Committee. The Government fully appreciates that the scope of the Inquiry is extensive and the issues are complex. The adoption of this form of inquiry is aimed at ensuring that the investigative work can proceed in a more flexible and expeditious manner while upholding the principles of openness and transparency. The Government expressly supports the Independent Committee's adoption of this mode of inquiry, and pledges its full support in response to the expectations of the families of the deceased, the residents of Wang Fuk Court and the public for a full account of the truth of this incident.

**B. The Government's Stance and Approach**

6. Following the Wang Fuk Court fire, the Chief Executive acted swiftly and established the Independent Committee in December 2025, demonstrating firm resolve to conduct a thorough investigation. Authorised by the Chief Executive, the Independent Committee immediately commenced its work and actively proceeded with its investigations.
7. The Government has adopted a proactive approach to cooperation in the Inquiry. Since the Independent Committee commenced its operations, Government departments have actively responded to letters issued by the Independent Committee's legal team, and have simultaneously and proactively submitted documents, information and witness statements relevant to the ToR to the Independent Committee. As a guiding principle throughout the Independent Committee's examination of the extensive range of investigative matters, the Government will raise and provide any information and documents it considers relevant to the Independent Committee's reference, without waiting to be asked.
8. Furthermore, the Government understands that the depth and breadth of the Inquiry requires the continuous supply of information and documents from all parties throughout the investigative process, so as to enable the Independent Committee to conduct a comprehensive investigation and make findings on the basis of a full grasp of the relevant objective circumstances. Given the extensive scope and complexity of this matter, the collation of relevant documents and information has been an enormously demanding task, and all Government departments have been doing their utmost to cooperate within extremely tight timeframes, and have continued to do so.

9. Since the Independent Committee commenced its work in December 2025, the relevant Government departments have submitted a large volume of witness statements and documentary materials to the Independent Committee within a short period of time, which also reflects the high importance the Government attaches to the Inquiry and its full support for the work of the Independent Committee.
  
10. At the same time, the Independent Committee and its legal team have also reviewed the large volume of documents and materials submitted by the relevant Government departments and other parties, and have accordingly compiled the hearing bundles and drawn up witness lists for the Inquiry. The Government understands that the facts and background of the Inquiry are complex and intricate, and many details remain to be presented and clarified in the course of the Inquiry. In the upcoming public hearings of the Inquiry, the relevant witnesses will give evidence and be examined on their respective areas, which should help the public gain a more comprehensive understanding of the full circumstances of the incident. The Government will continue to cooperate fully with the work of the Independent Committee throughout the course of the hearings, so as to present an objective and complete picture of the incident to the Independent Committee and the public.

### **C. Basic Background on Wang Fuk Court and the Course of the Fire**

#### **Overview of Wang Fuk Court**

11. Wang Fuk Court is a Home Ownership Scheme (“HOS”) estate in Hong Kong, completed in 1983, comprising eight residential blocks: Wang Yan House (Block A), Wang To House (Block B), Wang San House (Block C), Wang Kin House (Block D), Wang Tai House (Block E), Wang Cheong

House (Block F), Wang Shing House (Block G) and Wang Chi House (Block H).

12. Each block has thirty-one floors, with each floor divided into eight residential units (numbered (1) to (8)) connected by a corridor, with the lift lobby located at the centre of the corridor. Opposite the lift lobby, there are two interlocking staircases (commonly known as “scissor stairs”) serving as means of escape in case of fire. Both staircases run from the thirty-first floor at the top down to the ground floor, but only one of them provides access to the rooftop.
13. Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Housing Ordinance (Cap. 283) and the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123), Wang Fuk Court is subject to regulation under the Buildings Ordinance, and is regulated by the Independent Checking Unit (“**ICU**”) under the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Housing, which operates under the authority delegated by the Building Authority (i.e. the Director of Buildings) and in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and the Building Authority’s policies and guidelines.

### **Background to the Building Maintenance Works**

14. Wang Fuk Court was selected as a target building under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (“**MBIS**”) in 2014.
15. The ICU subsequently issued a pre-notification letter for the MBIS to the Incorporated Owners of Wang Fuk Court (“**Wang Fuk Court IO**”) on 29 April 2014, and on 10 June 2016 formally served the Statutory Notice on the Wang Fuk Court IO under section 30B(3) of the Buildings Ordinance requiring the carrying out of prescribed inspection and prescribed repair.

16. Thereafter, the ICU approved five extensions to the deadline of the statutory notice between June 2017 and October 2019.
17. The Wang Fuk Court IO appointed Will Power Architects Company Limited (“**WP**”) as the inspection consultant in January 2019.
18. In December 2021, WP was appointed by the Wang Fuk Court IO as the supervisory and repair consultant for the maintenance works.
19. In May 2023, the Wang Fuk Court IO commenced tendering for a contractor for the maintenance works. On 28 January 2024, Prestige Construction & Engineering Co. Limited (“**PC&E**”) was selected by the Wang Fuk Court IO as the contractor for the maintenance works. The maintenance works officially commenced in July 2024.

### **Overview of the Course of the Fire**

20. At 2:51 pm on 26 November 2025, the Fire Services Communications Centre of the Fire Services Department (“**FSD**”) received the first fire report, in which the caller stated that the external scaffolding of Wang Cheong House was on fire and there had been an explosion. The first fire appliance arrived at the scene at 2:56 pm.
21. In light of the rapid development of the fire and the increasing resources required for fire-fighting and Search and Rescue Operations, firefighters upgraded the fire to No. 3 Alarm Fire six minutes after arrival (i.e. at 3:02 pm). Firefighters subsequently further upgraded the fire to No. 4 Alarm Fire at 3:34 pm. Finally, the Deputy Director (Operations) upgraded the fire to No. 5 Alarm Fire at 6:22 pm and personally assumed overall command of the operations.

22. Based on the preliminary information currently available to the Government, it is believed that the fire spread rapidly upward along the re-entrant on the external walls of the affected blocks, with the manner of spread suspected to have been influenced by the “chimney effect”, whereby hot air, smoke and combustible gases rose rapidly within the re-entrant. In certain blocks, the fire spread from the lower floors to the rooftop within an extremely short period of time. The rapid development of the fire in certain blocks resulted in a continuous shower of burning bamboo scaffolding and debris falling from height, which accumulated on the ground and blocked the entrances and exits of Wang Cheong House and Wang Tai House; the fire also spread rapidly to other blocks due to weather conditions.
23. According to reports from frontline firefighters, thermal imaging cameras detected temperatures as high as 800 degrees Celsius in some of the affected units, while some corridors also reached approximately 400 degrees Celsius.
24. Throughout the operation, a total of nine firefighters who were carrying out fire-fighting and Search and Rescue Operations inside the blocks required hospitalisation due to heat exhaustion, physical exhaustion, breathing difficulties, smoke inhalation or being struck by falling objects. Most tragically, a firefighter who had entered the upper floors of Wang Tai House in the early stages of the fire lost his life in the line of duty.
25. Police officers also maintained order at the scene and assisted with the fire-fighting operations, before subsequently devoting themselves wholeheartedly to the follow-up evidential search, investigation and victim identification work.

26. Medical personnel also worked tirelessly to save every injured person, dedicating themselves to lifesaving and casualty treatment. Other frontline staff, civil servants and concerned citizens also spared no effort to participate in the rescue and subsequent relief operations.
27. The fire ultimately claimed 168 lives, and caused injury to a number of persons and severe damage to property.

**D. Preliminary Observations on the Causes of the Fire and Related Issues of Accountability**

28. The ascertainment of the causes of the fire and related issues of accountability is the core of ToR item (1) and the most important aspect of the Inquiry. To assist the Independent Committee, the following paragraphs set out preliminary observations on the relevant causes and issues of accountability based on the preliminary information currently available to the Government. Naturally, as further evidence is disclosed, as witnesses and experts give their evidence, and as the Inquiry progresses, the Government will update or supplement these observations as appropriate. Detailed analysis will be reserved until after the relevant experts and witnesses have completed their evidence at the hearings, so as to enable the Independent Committee to make informed and comprehensive findings after full consideration of the submissions of all parties.
29. Prior to the Independent Committee commencing its work in December 2025, the FSD had already established an Inter-departmental Fire Investigation Task Force (the “**Task Force**”), comprising officers from the Hong Kong Police Force, the Buildings Department (“**BD**”), the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the ICU, the Labour Department (“**LD**”), the Government Laboratory and fire engineering professionals, to

conduct an in-depth investigation into the causes of the fire. The findings of the Task Force will also provide reference and support for the Independent Committee in discharging its duties under ToR item (1). The investigation is currently ongoing and will continue to be updated as it progresses.

30. Meanwhile, in the course of preparing for the hearings, the relevant Government departments have submitted a large volume of documents, witness statements and technical materials to the Committee on the various issues covered by ToR item (1).
31. The causes of the fire and issues of accountability falling within ToR item (1) are believed to be capable of examination at two levels: first, the direct causes of the fire; and second, the systemic issues related to the fire and areas for improvement in the relevant systems. The two levels are complementary and together constitute the content of the Independent Committee's investigation under ToR item (1).
32. The Government notes that, at the Direction Conference on 5 February 2026, Leading Counsel of the Independent Committee observed that the available information suggests that this incident involved a series of structural problems that cannot be overlooked. This observation also confirms the necessity of examining the fire at both levels: ascertaining the direct causes alone is insufficient to address the public's deep concerns about this incident; only by also conducting an in-depth examination of the underlying systemic issues can result in effective forestalling of potential risks.

### **Preliminary Observations on the Direct Causes**

33. Based on information and footage provided by eyewitnesses, the fire is believed to have originated from the platform outside units 104 and 105 of Wang Cheong House. This finding was subsequently supported by evidence obtained by the Task Force through site inspections and investigations.
34. As regards the cause of ignition, the police have preliminarily ruled out arson, on the basis that forensic examination found no trace of accelerants at the source of ignition, and no suspicious behaviour by any person was observed in the vicinity prior to the fire. Having ruled out arson, the Task Force's investigation has focused on accidental factors. The Task Force has preliminarily concluded that the fire was most likely accidental in nature, caused by a heat source igniting combustible materials.
35. In addition to ascertaining the cause of ignition, it is equally important to understand how the fire was able to spread throughout the entire estate within such a short period of time.
36. As regards casualties and property damage, in addition to the intensity of the fire itself, there are other factors of concern which warrant in-depth examination by the Independent Committee.
37. The Task Force set out preliminary conclusions on the causes and manner of spread of the fire in its interim investigation report dated February 2026. The Task Force will continue to conduct in-depth investigations into the details of the incident, including fire analysis and computational fluid dynamics simulation tests, and will provide a detailed analysis in its final report. The final report is provisionally scheduled to be completed in May 2026 and will be submitted to the Independent Committee upon completion.

38. Meanwhile, Professor Richard Yuen Kwok-kit, appointed as an expert by the Task Force, has also conducted relevant research work and analysis, including fire simulations, since the fire occurred. The FSD has also submitted Professor Yuen's expert report dated 10 February 2026 to the Independent Committee for its consideration.
39. The above factors will be subjects for in-depth consideration by the Independent Committee at the hearings (together with the experts appointed by the Independent Committee, namely Professor Asif Sohail Usmani and Professor Jiang Liming).

#### **Preliminary Observations on Systemic Causes**

40. Ascertaining the direct causes of the fire is merely the starting point, not the end point, of the Inquiry. ToR item (1) expressly provides that the Independent Committee is required to investigate "the circumstances that led to the fire", a formulation of far-reaching significance that requires the Independent Committee not only to ascertain the direct cause of ignition, but also to conduct an in-depth examination of the deeper factors and systemic background that contributed to or exacerbated the outbreak and spread of the fire. In order to prevent similar tragedies from happening again, the more fundamental issue is to conduct an in-depth examination of whether the existing systems have any deficiencies or areas for improvement in preventing the occurrence of such type of incidents.
41. In this regard, ToR item (1) expressly lists a number of specific areas that the Committee is required to examine.
42. In examining the various systemic issues, the Independent Committee will need to have an appreciation of the historical background and technical complexity of Hong Kong's system for regulating building management

and maintenance works. The Government sets out a brief submission here in the hope that it will assist the Independent Committee.

43. The various existing systems relating to building maintenance works, site safety, building management and fire safety have not been established overnight, but have evolved over decades of policy development and legislative evolution, with building owners, the industry (including authorised professionals and contractors, among others) and various Government departments each playing their respective roles and working in a complementary fashion. The technical aspects involved in these systems – including construction works specifications, fire safety standards, building material requirements and site supervision mechanisms – all involve professional considerations. The Independent Committee will be able to, through the evidence of the relevant parties including Government departmental officers and expert witnesses – and in particular their detailed explanations on the above technical matters and systemic background – fully understand how the systems operate; and on that basis, objectively examine whether the existing arrangements have any deficiencies or areas for improvement, and assess the relevant roles and responsibilities of the various parties.
  
44. As shown by the records, the FSD had received notification from a registered fire service installation contractor prior to the fire that the fire hydrant/hose reel systems of the eight blocks of Wang Fuk Court were required to be shut down for maintenance. However, until the fire broke out, the FSD had not been notified of any need to shut down the fire alarm systems of the eight blocks of Wang Fuk Court. Nonetheless, preliminary indications suggest that at the time of the Wang Fuk Court fire, the fire alarm systems of at least seven of the eight affected blocks were not

functioning effectively. The Independent Committee will therefore examine, under the existing system, the roles of Government departments, building owners, the industry (including authorised professionals and contractors, among others) and other stakeholders (including property management companies, among others), as well as the regulatory and relevant supervisory systems and areas for improvement, in respect of the effective operation of fire service installations.

45. Construction safety requirements, standards, supervision, site and building management and day-to-day maintenance regime for building maintenance works: The Independent Committee will be able to examine the existing legislative and regulatory framework, in particular regarding temporary construction measures used in external wall maintenance works on multi-storey buildings, including scaffolding, wooden planks, safety nets (commonly known as “scaffolding nets”) and toe-boards. This includes the roles of Government departments, building owners, the industry (including authorised professionals and contractors, among others) and other stakeholders (including property management companies, among others) under the existing system, as well as the regulatory and relevant supervisory systems and areas for improvement, including whether the existing safety standards (such as applicable fire-retardant standards) are sufficiently clear and specific, and whether the penalties carry sufficient deterrence. As regards the supervisory system, the Independent Committee may further examine whether the existing mechanisms can effectively ensure that specified building materials and construction procedures comply with the requirements of the relevant regulations and safety standards during the course of the works, and whether the existing supervision can achieve effective on-site verification and inspection of actual conditions on the construction site. Furthermore, the Independent

Committee may assess, in terms of the overall design of the industry regulatory framework, site supervision, site and building management and day-to-day maintenance regime, and whether the relevant systems have structural gaps or deficiencies.

46. The prevailing list of materials meeting safety standards (such as applicable fire-retardant standards) and the verification and testing systems for the relevant building materials: As regards the requirements under the existing system for the use of materials meeting safety standards (such as applicable fire-retardant standards) in building maintenance works, whether such requirements are sufficiently clear, practically workable and conducive to proper site management, covering key categories of building materials in accordance with risk; and whether the existing inspection mechanism can effectively identify and intercept use of non-compliant materials at construction sites – these are matters on which the Independent Committee will be able to rely at the hearings on explanations from the relevant experts and persons with experience in material testing and works supervision (including officers of the relevant Government departments involved in the Wang Fuk Court maintenance works).
  
47. The roles and responsibilities of supervisory personnel, building owners and the industry across all stages: The safe implementation of building maintenance works is directly related to the ability of citizens to live and work in peace and contentment. As noted above, the regulatory landscape under the existing system – in which Government departments, building owners, the industry (including authorised professionals and contractors, among others) and other stakeholders (including property management companies, among others) work in a complementary and mutually supportive manner – has its historical development and objective technical

reasons. The relevant Government departments will provide detailed explanations to the Independent Committee on the regulatory arrangements and specific implementation within their purview, rendering full assistance to the Independent Committee in clarifying the division of roles and responsibilities at each stage.

**E. Systemic Issues of Conflicts of Interest, Collusion and Irregularities in Tendering**

48. Regarding the issues falling within ToR item (2), the Government agrees with the observation made by Leading Counsel of the Independent Committee at the Direction Conference on 5 February 2026 that these matters must be dealt with in the overriding interests of the public. In relation to the above matters, law enforcement agencies are also conducting independent criminal investigations and prosecution proceedings. It is in the public interest to ascertain the truth, establish accountability and ensure that legal proceedings are conducted fairly. It is certainly not in the public interest for those who ought to be held legally responsible to escape accountability.
49. Based on the information currently available, the involvement of the relevant Government departments in the tendering process for the Wang Fuk Court maintenance works appears, on a preliminary basis, to have not been significant. The relevant Government departments will uphold the principle of public interest above all else, maintain transparency throughout the Independent Committee's investigation, and assist the Independent Committee in discharging its duties under the ToR.
50. Furthermore, the Government notes that Leading Counsel of the Independent Committee specifically emphasised at the Direction Conference that the scope of ToR item (2) is not limited to the individual

Wang Fuk Court project itself, but extends to wider systemic issues. In this regard, the relevant Government departments will likewise cooperate with the Committee's investigative work and provide information and assistance on the broader systemic issues.

**F. Improvement Measures**

51. Following the Wang Fuk Court fire, the Government fully understands its responsibility to take immediate action to address public concerns and to drive reforms to the relevant systems, so as to ensure that similar tragedies do not happen again. The Chief Executive has also pledged that the investigation will hold all parties to full account, and has initiated the launching of improvement measures across all areas in support of and to assist the Independent Committee's comprehensive review, with a view to completing the work as expeditiously as possible and implementing the systemic reforms.
  
52. ToR items (3) and (4) respectively require the Independent Committee to examine whether regulation and penalties under relevant existing laws are adequate, and to make recommendations on the matters covered by ToR items (1) to (3). These two ToR are expected to provide important directions for the Government's push for reform in light of the issues revealed by the fire. The Government understands that the Independent Committee's investigation findings and recommendations will provide important guidance for future systemic reforms. The relevant Government departments will also give serious consideration to and respond positively to the recommendations made by the Independent Committee in its final report on the above matters.
  
53. In the meantime, the Government has taken action on the various issues revealed by the fire at both the levels of immediate response and medium-

to-long-term systemic reforms. The immediate measures aim to provide necessary safeguards for the most pressing issues in the existing system; the medium-to-long-term reform measures await implementation of systemic reforms on a more comprehensive basis. The following paragraphs set out an overview of some of the immediate and proposed medium-to-long-term measures taken by the relevant Government departments since the fire.

54. The relevant measures reflect both the Government's serious concern about the various issues revealed by the fire and its commitment and determination to systemic reforms. The Government firmly believes that the Independent Committee's investigative work will provide a solid foundation for driving more comprehensive and deeper systemic reforms in the future, and the Government will also respond positively and substantively after the Independent Committee has made its recommendations.

### **Immediate Measures**

55. In order to deal with fire service installation and equipment problems discovered during fire incidents in a timely and effective manner, the FSD has established a dedicated Quick Response Team operating on a round-the-clock standby basis since 4 December 2025. The Quick Response Team will be deployed to respond to all building fires to examine the operation of fire service installations during fires, and to take immediate follow-up or enforcement action where necessary.
56. Furthermore, in view of the potential fire risks that may arise from large-scale building maintenance / renovation works, the FSD immediately reallocated internal resources to establish a dedicated task force to conduct focused inspections of the fire service installation conditions of the

relevant buildings. The inspection work has commenced since 4 December 2025.

57. With effect from 6 January 2026, the FSD introduced targeted measures to strengthen alerts on fire service installation failures, requiring all registered fire service installation contractors, when shutting down fire service installations, to fulfil their obligations to identify, assess and report the cascading effects on other installations, and to disclose the impairment of fire service installations to the building's owners, occupants and property management company, thereby enhancing the overall fire safety of buildings. In addition, the FSD has optimised the management of fire service installation power supplies and introduced new requirements for the affixing of seals and management standards, whereby contractors are required to affix green or red seals to the power switches according to the power supply status of the fire service installations, so as to ensure that the building's owners, occupants and property management company can immediately ascertain the status of the main fire service power supply.
58. Furthermore, in response to the problem of scaffolding nets of varying quality, the Development Bureau on 3 December 2025 ordered all scaffolding nets on buildings undergoing large-scale maintenance works to be removed within three working days, and immediately reviewed and reformed the arrangements for testing scaffolding nets, establishing multiple checkpoints in the system to ensure that only scaffolding nets that have passed tests may be used in the relevant maintenance works (details as set out in paragraph 60 below).
59. The BD also immediately launched a special operation to inspect approximately 400 private buildings undergoing large-scale maintenance works with scaffolding erected, to check fire-retardant test reports and

certificates for scaffolding nets, and to collect samples of scaffolding nets on-site for testing by accredited laboratories. The BD also issued a circular to all registered building professionals and registered contractors on 27 November 2025, requiring all contractors to submit reports on the scaffolding nets / protective screens on the external walls of buildings under their charge, together with the relevant certificates and test reports from accredited laboratories, to confirm compliance with recognised fire-retardant standards and that the materials are in good condition. Subsequently, from late December 2025, the BD had also launched a special inspection operation to examine whether the maintenance and repair works at over 300 buildings were in proper compliance with the relevant fire safety precautionary measures, such as whether fire barriers (including fire doors and fire-resistant fixed windows) had been removed. The enhanced inspection of large-scale building maintenance sites has continued as a regular exercise after the completion of the above special operation.

60. To ensure that scaffolding protective materials comply with recognised standards and to effectively address the problem of forged test reports, the BD promulgated Practice Note for Registered Contractors No. 85 in mid-December 2025, introducing three main new requirements. First, registered contractors are required to obtain fire-retardant performance test reports provided with each batch of scaffolding nets received, and to keep them on the construction site for inspection by enforcement authorities at any time. Second, registered contractors are required to take samples of scaffolding nets for testing as required, including the requirement that, before commencing the relevant works on an existing building, samples of scaffolding nets must first be taken and a test report confirming compliance with recognised fire-retardant performance standards must be obtained

before the scaffolding nets may be installed, thereby ensuring that scaffolding nets used on construction sites comply with fire-retardant performance standards. In addition, inspection of scaffolding nets must be conducted by Government-designated accredited laboratories, and test reports must be encrypted and digitally signed to ensure their authenticity and integrity. Third, upon receipt of a notification of scaffolding net installation, the BD will randomly select certain projects where scaffolding nets have been installed for on-site inspection. If it is found that a contractor has not complied with the requirements of the new system, or if the results of random sampling tests fail to meet the recognised fire-retardant standards, the BD will make an immediate cease work order and require the removal of non-compliant scaffolding nets, and will reserve the right to take other appropriate punitive action in accordance with the law.

61. The BD held a seminar in late January 2026 to remind the industry of the requirements under the new scaffolding net sampling and testing system, as well as the fire safety matters to be observed during building maintenance works. In early March, the BD also issued a circular letter to registered building professionals and registered contractors, once again reminding the industry of the need to observe and comply with the relevant fire safety codes and measures for buildings during large-scale building maintenance works.
62. Following the fire, the ICU immediately cooperated with the BD's special operation to conduct on-site inspections of Home Ownership Scheme estates and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates undergoing large-scale repair and improvement works, and in response to the circular issued by the BD to all registered professionals and contractors on 27 November 2025, required the contractors of the relevant estates to submit relevant

certificates and test reports on the scaffolding nets / protective screens installed on the external walls of buildings, to confirm compliance with recognised fire prevention standards and that the materials are in good condition. Following the Development Bureau's order to remove scaffolding nets in early December 2025, the ICU has continued to conduct inspections of the scaffolding conditions of the above estates.

63. The LD also immediately launched a citywide special enforcement operation to inspect the fire prevention facilities and fire response arrangements at building maintenance construction sites with large scaffolding erected. The LD subsequently continued to follow up on the rectification of non-compliant sites and sites from which external wall scaffolding nets had been removed, so as to safeguard workers' safety.
64. In terms of estate management, in response to the unprecedented management challenges faced by Wang Fuk Court following the fire, the Secretary for Home Affairs and Youth invoked section 31 of the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344) for the first time to apply to the Lands Tribunal to dissolve the management committee of the existing Incorporated Owners of Wang Fuk Court and to appoint Hop On Management Company Limited ("**Hop On**"), a subsidiary of the Chinachem Group, as the administrator. The Lands Tribunal granted the application on 6 January 2026, and Hop On has commenced its work.

### **Medium-to-Long-Term Reform Measures**

65. Fire Services Department: The FSD has established a "Mega-scale Fire Incidents Strategic Steering Committee" to review the effectiveness of operations in handling major fires and areas for improvement. The FSD will deepen rescue cooperation and coordination mechanism with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, incorporating major

fire incidents into the scope of cooperation and drills, and optimising the coordination procedures for fire operations among the three places. Furthermore, in terms of technology application, the FSD will enhance the use of big data and artificial intelligence to analyse inspection-derived risk data and formulate targeted mitigation strategies, and will explore the adoption of the latest technology for continuous monitoring of the operational status of fire service installations. To further enhance overall fire safety, the FSD has established a “Legislative Amendment Working Group” to conduct a dedicated review of the existing legal framework for regulating fire service installations and equipment, regulating registered fire service installation contractors, and eliminating fire hazards, so as to identify areas suitable for amendment or update and to implement a series of legislative amendments. In terms of regulating fire service installations and equipment, the FSD proposes the introduction of a legislative provision requiring that the shutting down of fire service installations of a building must first obtain the Department’s approval, so as to strengthen the FSD’s regulatory function. In addition, it is proposed to introduce the statutory management responsibility of property management companies for fire service installations in buildings, making property management companies statutory responsible parties for fire safety in the system. In terms of regulating registered fire service installation contractors, it is proposed to significantly increase the penalties for registered contractors who issue false or misleading fire service installation and equipment certificates, so as to enhance the deterring effect. As regards offences related to fire hazards, it is proposed to introduce a fixed penalty system for certain readily verifiable contraventions, so as to enhance enforcement efficiency and the certainty and consistency of penalties.

66. Labour Department: The LD is amending legislation to implement a comprehensive smoking ban on construction sites, including requiring contractors to take all reasonable measures to implement a no-smoking policy on construction sites, and to penalise persons who smoke on construction sites with a fixed penalty, thereby improving safety levels at construction sites. At the same time, the LD is revising the Code of Practice relevant to scaffolding and setting out requirements for the materials used for what is commonly known as toe boards.
67. Development Bureau and Buildings Department: In terms of the regulatory framework, the scope of amendments to the Buildings Ordinance will be expanded to include: upgrading large-scale maintenance works from their current classification mainly as Class 2 minor works to Class 1 minor works, so as to enhance regulatory requirements by specifying that prescribed plans must be prepared and supervision conducted by a third-party professional; and making the safety standards for specified building materials currently promulgated by the BD through Practice Notes and other administrative means into statutory requirements, so as to enable direct prosecution for non-compliant materials and to increase penalties. It is also proposed to enhance regulation of registered building professionals and registered contractors, including increasing the maximum penalties for contraventions and strengthening the registration and disciplinary system – for example, so that future conviction under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance may also give rise to disciplinary action and be taken into consideration as a factor in registration renewal. Additionally, the BD will strengthen audit checks and enforcement on a risk-based approach.
68. Furthermore, in order to reduce the risk of bid-rigging, the Development Bureau is working with the Urban Renewal Authority to formulate

measures and plans to launch an enhanced “Smart Tender” service in the second half of this year, including: (1) formulating a more stringent pre-qualification list of consultants and contractors, which in addition to considering criminal and disciplinary records will also take into account more information reflecting past performance; consultants and contractors will also be required to pass background checks by the Police and Independent Commission Against Corruption before being included in the list and participating in tenders; (2) the Urban Renewal Authority will act as a gatekeeper for building owners in conducting tendering and evaluation work for engaging consultants and contractors; and (3) for buildings applying for Government maintenance subsidies, the Urban Renewal Authority will require consultants and contractors to report to the Urban Renewal Authority at important project milestones, such as significant changes in the scope of works or increases in project costs. so that the Urban Renewal Authority can provide independent advice to building owners. The 2026-27 Budget recently announced proposes to allocate a total of \$300 million to the Urban Renewal Authority, of which \$100 million is seed funding to enable the Urban Renewal Authority to establish a dedicated team to provide the enhanced “Smart Tender” service, and the remaining \$200 million will be used as subsidies to encourage building owners to use the enhanced “Smart Tender” service.

69. ICU: The ICU will continue to carry out the relevant building control work in accordance with the regulatory framework of the BD and the safety requirements for building materials, including the newly established standards mentioned above. In addition, the ICU proposes to strengthen inter-departmental cooperation in respect of the relevant regulation of large-scale repair works, for example by jointly handling complaints and enquiries with broad impact. At the same time, the ICU will also discuss

with the BD the feasibility of requiring professionals to submit on-site supervision records for large-scale repair works, so as to enhance the scrutiny of inspections.

70. Home Affairs Department: The Home Affairs Department will leverage its role in maintaining close liaison with owners' corporations to facilitate communication and coordination between the relevant Government departments and owners' corporations. In addition, the Home Affairs Department has preliminarily formulated five major directions for amendment to the Building Management Ordinance, including: raising the attendance and in-person voting thresholds for decisions on large-scale maintenance works and major procurement; enhancing the system for proxy instruments; enhancing the system for declaration of interests; clarifying meeting procedures; and strengthening the powers of the competent authority.
71. At the overall systemic level, the fire has also revealed that there is room for further optimisation of the existing inter-departmental collaboration mechanism. Each relevant department will systematically optimise its collaboration mechanism with other departments across four levels: policy formulation, day-to-day inspection, enforcement action and emergency crisis management.
72. The relevant Government bureaux and departments will strive to push forward and implement the above-announced improvement measures as early as possible, and to continuously review and study further measures, so that the system can be improved at the earliest opportunity and citizens can benefit from a better system as soon as possible. The Government will also make further improvements and refinements after the Independent Committee has completed its investigation and made its recommendations.

**G. Other Matters**

73. As regards the roles, responsibilities and related legal issues of other parties involved in the Inquiry, subject to the further disclosure of relevant information by the Independent Committee and completion of evidence by the relevant witnesses and experts in the course of the hearings, the Government will make a comprehensive and full submission on its position.

## **H. Conclusion**

74. The Independent Committee's investigation bears the important mission of ascertaining the truth, establishing accountability and driving reform. The Government fully understands that only through the Independent Committee's comprehensive review, with objective, fair and comprehensive findings on the various issues revealed by the fire, can the heartfelt expectations of the families of the deceased, the residents of Wang Fuk Court and the public at large for a just account be truly met.
75. The Government will cooperate fully with the work of the Independent Committee throughout the investigative process, with a view to driving substantive and far-reaching reforms at the systemic level to prevent similar tragedies from happening again. The Government expects that, through the Inquiry and follow-up work thereafter, Hong Kong's building safety and fire safety systems will be reviewed and improved, the safety protection afforded by the relevant systems will be substantively strengthened, and the reasonable expectations of the public will be duly met.

[Original Chinese version submitted to the Independent Committee in relation  
to the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po on 9 March 2026]

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