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<p>1 Tuesday, 24 March 2026</p> <p>2 (10.00 am)</p> <p>3 CHAIRMAN: Now we'd like to invite Mr Jenkin Suen SC,</p> <p>4 representing the Government and the relevant department,</p> <p>5 to speak.</p> <p>6 Opening submissions by MR SUEN</p> <p>7 MR SUEN: Chairman, members, good morning. On behalf of the</p> <p>8 Government, I'm going to make my opening submissions.</p> <p>9 Earlier on I already talked to the counsel</p> <p>10 representing the Secretariat. I'm going to need one</p> <p>11 hour, after which we're going to take a break.</p> <p>12 There are a total of five parts to my submissions:</p> <p>13 one, regarding the development of investigation; two,</p> <p>14 regarding the emergency response and the rescue</p> <p>15 operation of the Fire Services Department; three, the</p> <p>16 system framework in relation to renovation works at</p> <p>17 Wang Fuk Court; four, the causes of the fire; and five,</p> <p>18 the immediate measures adopted by the Government as well</p> <p>19 as the improvement measures. In the end, the Committee</p> <p>20 will publish a report.</p> <p>21 Chairman and members, the Wang Fuk Court blaze</p> <p>22 claimed a total of 168 lives. Extensive damage has been</p> <p>23 caused to different blocks in Wang Fuk Court. The</p> <p>24 Government understands very well that a significant</p> <p>25 impact has been caused on members of the public in</p>	<p>1 The position of the Government is not to defend anyone.</p> <p>2 Our position is to present the truth to the Independent</p> <p>3 Committee.</p> <p>4 Therefore, the Government has never shied away from</p> <p>5 the following three aspects: one, there are deficiencies</p> <p>6 in the system; two, the Government has a responsibility</p> <p>7 for overseeing the work; three, the Government will</p> <p>8 carry out systemic reforms. I hope that the public will</p> <p>9 understand the position of the Government is honest and</p> <p>10 genuine.</p> <p>11 Details involving this incident are complex. During</p> <p>12 the evidential hearing, the government will do its best</p> <p>13 to collaborate with the Independent Committee.</p> <p>14 Witnesses will also make their submissions and be</p> <p>15 cross-examined during the evidential hearing. We aim to</p> <p>16 show to the public and the Independent Committee the</p> <p>17 whole facts and the whole truth.</p> <p>18 Civil hearings and criminal hearings will also</p> <p>19 adhere to the principles applicable to them. The</p> <p>20 Government understands very well not only for the</p> <p>21 bereaved families but all sectors of society want to</p> <p>22 have the final result of the investigation. It is</p> <p>23 understandable that there has been much concern</p> <p>24 surrounding the investigation of the Independent</p> <p>25 Committee. However, we need to be fair to all parties</p>
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<p>1 Hong Kong as well as the bereaved families. Once again,</p> <p>2 we express our deepest condolences to the bereaved</p> <p>3 families.</p> <p>4 The Government announced the setting-up of the</p> <p>5 Independent Committee to look into the case. The</p> <p>6 Government said that they would pursue full</p> <p>7 accountability of all the parties involved. Reforms</p> <p>8 will be made. We need to uncover the truth in order to</p> <p>9 help the bereaved families to come to terms with the</p> <p>10 incident. We have been adopting an honest and public</p> <p>11 approach.</p> <p>12 During the submission of evidence, whether it be in</p> <p>13 favour of or against the Government, we will lay all the</p> <p>14 evidence on the table. I believe the public will feel</p> <p>15 it when the counsel for the Secretariat made the opening</p> <p>16 submissions. The Government has reviewed the situation</p> <p>17 and identified room for improvement. Having regard to</p> <p>18 the needs, a more detailed review will be conducted.</p> <p>19 There are a total of two principles. First, we</p> <p>20 adopt a proactive approach. All government departments</p> <p>21 are responsible for collaborating with the Independent</p> <p>22 Committee in its investigation. They don't take any</p> <p>23 passive approach. Second, they proactively furnish</p> <p>24 information and evidence. As long as it is within their</p> <p>25 remit, they will try their best to provide information.</p>	<p>1 involved. The Independent Committee, as well as all</p> <p>2 sectors of society, need to maintain impartiality. They</p> <p>3 need to scrutinise the evidence in an impartial manner.</p> <p>4 We urge the public to stay patient so that the</p> <p>5 Independent Committee can carry out its investigation</p> <p>6 and conduct the evidential hearing in an impartial</p> <p>7 manner so that they can make a judgment or decision in</p> <p>8 relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>9 Last Friday, just at the start of the evidential</p> <p>10 hearing, chairman made some remarks. I believe the</p> <p>11 public have heard them loud and clear. In the opening</p> <p>12 submissions of the counsel for the Secretariat, much</p> <p>13 evidence has become available but then they have -- it</p> <p>14 has been misunderstood, and in consequence, conclusions</p> <p>15 have been made. However, this is not the truth. We are</p> <p>16 still in the stage of making submissions. Witnesses</p> <p>17 haven't yet come to the box to testify. The Independent</p> <p>18 Committee needs to stay fair and impartial in its</p> <p>19 conduct of the evidential hearing. We need to be fair</p> <p>20 to the involved parties but also the victims and the</p> <p>21 bereaved families of the fire. Therefore, we shouldn't</p> <p>22 make any premature decisions in relation to the</p> <p>23 liability of the different parties involved.</p> <p>24 The counsel for the Secretariat will also bear in</p> <p>25 mind natural justice as well as procedural justice. All</p>

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<p>1 involved parties should be given ample opportunities to 2 make explanations and responses.</p> <p>3 In his limited time, the counsel for the Secretariat 4 has shown us some evidence. He didn't mean to arrive at 5 any conclusion. We agree with the clarifications made 6 by the counsel for the Secretariat as well as chairman. 7 I made a brief submission last Friday. Different people 8 in the community, as well as the media, have reported 9 extensively the opening submissions of the counsel for 10 the Secretariat. Very detailed deductions and analyses 11 have been conducted in relation to some evidence or 12 opening submissions. Some explicit or implicit 13 deductions have been made which cause misunderstandings 14 in society as if conclusions have already been made. 15 This is far from the truth.</p> <p>16 It is not appropriate either that in some reports 17 there were specific accusations, causing the doxxing of 18 some government officials.</p> <p>19 I already said last week that in my opening 20 submissions today I'm going to make clarifications in 21 order to set the record straight in my opening 22 submissions. However, I need to stress my intention is 23 not to undermine or obstruct the work of the Independent 24 Committee. In contrast, as the government legal 25 representative, I have the responsibility to, at the</p>	<p>1 also be opportunities for officers of the FSD and the 2 Police Force to testify. On the afternoon of 3 26 November 2025 at 14:51 hours, the fire services 4 centre received the first call that the scaffolding on 5 the external building of Wang Cheong House was ablaze. 6 The fire services communication centre of the FSD 7 received the first call. A major pump, that is a fire 8 engine, as well as a light rescue unit were sent to the 9 scene. The fire hose systems were deactivated, that's 10 why a major pump was also sent to the scene. Additional 11 resources were deployed.</p> <p>12 Of course, the FSD can, having regard to the 13 situation, deploy additional resources. At 14:56, that 14 is 2.56 pm, the hydraulic platform, fire engine of 15 Tai Po Fire Station arrived at the scene at 14:56. At 16 15:02, the fire was upgraded to No. 3 alarm fire. 17 Afterwards, the fire quickly spread to different blocks 18 of buildings in Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>19 At 3.34 pm, the fire was upgraded to No. 4 and 20 upgraded to No. 5 further at 6.22 pm. The scale of the 21 fire was unprecedented. This shows the professionalism 22 and courage of fire officers. The Director of Fire 23 Services directed a command unit headed by the Director. 24 He was chaired by the Assistant Director of Fire 25 Services. The purpose is to make sure there will be</p>
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<p>1 start of the evidential hearing, make clarifications as 2 required.</p> <p>3 Of course, I have limited time in my opening 4 submissions. It is impossible for me to address every 5 single accusation. Different government departments and 6 involved parties should make clarifications when they 7 testify. This is more appropriate. More importantly, 8 after I make necessary responses, I hope to give the 9 public and the Independent Committee a more solid 10 background so that the hearing can be conducted in 11 a fair manner so that we do not have to quibble over 12 some minor details.</p> <p>13 Committee members have profound expertise and 14 knowledge. They are also well experienced. I believe 15 they can make insightful recommendations in relation to 16 systemic reforms.</p> <p>17 Next, in relation to the emergency response and the 18 rescue operations of the Fire Services Department and 19 the Police Force, I'm going to speak on this front.</p> <p>20 Last week, the counsel for the Secretariat made 21 remarks on the planning of the rescue operations of the 22 FSD and the Police Force. I believe the government has 23 the necessary responsibility to make explanations in 24 this regard. We need to help the public understand the 25 operation of the FSD and the Police Force. There will</p>	<p>1 sufficient logistical support, as well as coordination 2 and liaison. At 3.34 pm, when the fire was upgraded to 3 No. 4 alarm fire, the FSD had already deployed a total 4 of 48 fire engines and 13 ambulances. A total of 269 5 fire officers were deployed to the scene, doubling the 6 standard of a No. 5 alarm fire. That is 110 fire 7 officers.</p> <p>8 At 6.22 pm the FSD had sent a total of 116 fire 9 engines and 55 ambulances to the scene. There were 10 a total of 618 fire officers at the scene, 6.5 times 11 more than standard No. 5 alarm fire.</p> <p>12 At 10.30 pm, a total of 174 fire engines and 13 47 ambulances were sent to the scene. At the scene 14 there were a total of 989 fire officers, that is about 15 nine times the usual number of deployment or manpower in 16 a No. 5 alarm fire.</p> <p>17 The scale of the rescue operation was very serious. 18 Fire officers confronted different difficulties. For 19 instance, in the staircases and corridors in Wang Fuk 20 Court there was thick smoke. According to the thermal 21 imaging cameras, detected temperatures were as high as 22 800 degrees Celsius in some of the affected units while 23 some corridors also reached about 400 degrees Celsius. 24 Fire officers had no choice but to go up the storeys one 25 by one owing to the chimney effect.</p>

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<p>1 Fire spread from ground floor through the light well  2 upwards. In a short period of time, fire spread to the  3 rooftop of the blocks, and soon enough it spread to the  4 nearby blocks. Bamboo scaffolding debris fell from  5 height. They accumulated on the ground and blocked the  6 entrances and exits of Wang Cheong House and Wang Tai  7 House. Two fire officers working nearby were injured  8 and had to be hospitalised because of the fallen debris.  9 The most serious destruction was seen in these areas.  10 While fire officers were going up floor by floor, the  11 fire on the lower floors was reignited. That is why  12 fire officers needed to move here and there in order to  13 put out the fire. They also needed to stay safe.  14 The fire hydrant system and the fire hose reel  15 system were deactivated. That's why the FSD needed to  16 send additional manpower to work with the WSD to  17 increase the water pressure on the fire pumps. That was  18 to ensure there would be a sufficient supply of water on  19 higher floors. In relation to the statutory notices,  20 the FSD has implemented relevant enhancement measures.  21 However, in the shutdown notices, no fire alarm  22 systems, or FAS for short, had been deactivated. The  23 column of FAS was left empty. This will be further  24 clarified while witnesses are testifying.  25 In light of the challenges, fire officers still did</p>	<p>1 was responsible for coordinating resources and liaison.  2 It also maintained close communication with frontline  3 officers. Assistant commissioners of police operation  4 announced that the incident was a major incident at  5 5.36 pm. The CEU was also activated.  6 On victim identification, the DVIU of the police  7 force deployed 605 police officers in the action. On  8 28 November 2025, the unit commenced its operation.  9 Between 29 November as well as the end of November, the  10 relevant officers searched all seven blocks of Wang Fuk  11 Court and the operation ended on 23 January this year.  12 The inquiry centre, on 26 November 2025, at 6.32 pm,  13 commenced its work and there was 24/7 operation of the  14 centre until January 2026. The relevant unit received  15 489 reports of missing persons and 166 people were  16 confirmed dead, 37 were injured and another 184 people  17 were confirmed to have survived. The entire mission was  18 carried out thanks to the Police Force's dedication.  19 Now I will proceed to part 3 of my submission.  20 In the rest of the evidential hearing we have to  21 effectively scrutinise various factors as well as  22 evidence. The government is of the view that this has  23 to be done on the basis of having correct judgment and  24 that we have to scrutinise the regulatory regime, so in  25 part 3 of my submission I'll talk about the framework as</p>
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<p>1 their level best to put out fire.  2 As the counsel for the Secretariat said, Fire  3 Officer Mr Ho Wai Ho lost his life in the line of duty.  4 Another nine fire officers required hospitalisation due  5 to heat exhaustion, physical exhaustion, breathing  6 difficulties, smoke inhalation or being struck by  7 foreign objects. We express our gratitude to all fire  8 officers.  9 We understand there is concern over the fire,  10 including the use of unmanned aerial aircraft,  11 coordination with fire officers on the mainland and the  12 handling of bamboo scaffolding. The emergency alert  13 system was -- the system also raised concerns. We want  14 to let the public and the Independent Committee know  15 more about these aspects. In the witness statement of  16 fire officers, information was given and we hope to  17 provide comprehensive information for the public and the  18 Independent Committee.  19 In this incident, the Police Force responded very  20 quickly and very comprehensively. On the day of the  21 fire, the emergency unit, as well as the PTU, police  22 tactical unit, arrived at the scene at 2.59 pm on the  23 day of the fire. They directed traffic, managed crowd  24 management as well as evacuation management. The  25 command unit of NT North was activated at 3.40 pm. It</p>	<p>1 well as the system that applies to the Wang Fuk Court  2 maintenance works.  3 Prior to the fire, the works carried out in Wang Fuk  4 Court were carried out after the notice under the  5 Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme was received and it  6 is regulated by the ICU, so Committee members have to  7 understand the system in order to decide whether there  8 are any deficiencies in the system. We also have to  9 accurately understand the existing system in order to  10 decide how we can move forward to drive reforms.  11 First, I have to explain that the Mandatory Building  12 Inspection Scheme as well as the Minor Works Control  13 System involve two sets of laws. The Mandatory Building  14 Inspection Scheme may give rise to minor repair works  15 and of course this kind of minor repair works are  16 regulated under the Minor Works Control System.  17 Specifically, the project of Wang Fuk Court covers  18 two sets of procedures. First, the Mandatory Building  19 Inspection Scheme, or the MBIS. Simply put, this scheme  20 conducts a kind of health check for Wang Fuk Court, to  21 see if there are any areas that require repair and  22 maintenance. After the check is done, relevant repair  23 works will have to be carried out. Building owners may  24 decide to carry out extra works that do not fall under  25 the MBIS.</p>

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<p>1 Generally speaking, this kind of extra works that                  2 need to be carried out are way more simpler than having                  3 to redevelop a building. This falls under Cap 41 of our                  4 law and we can follow the Minor Works Control System.                  5 MBIS, as well as the Minor Works Control System,                  6 requires building owners of Wang Fuk Court to hire                  7 professionals to monitor the projects. At the same                  8 time, the Government also needs to supervise the                  9 project, and that is the work of the ICU.                  10 The leading counsel in his opening submission                  11 touched on the background of the ICU. It was                  12 established in November 2000. It is one of the measures                  13 implemented by the Housing Authority in Hong Kong. This                  14 ICU or the Independent Checking Unit makes reference to                  15 the Buildings Ordinance as well as the guidelines                  16 implemented by the building authority to supervise                  17 works.                  18 Starting from 2001, the ICU has started to supervise                  19 the Building Committee of the ICU, that is any new                  20 projects that commenced after May 2000 under the                  21 committee.                  22 Starting from 2003, any building works that had to                  23 be carried out also fall under the purview of the ICU.                  24 The setting-up of the ICU is to make good use of public                  25 resources. The Buildings Department itself does not</p>	<p>1 Buildings Ordinance, the relevant department officially                  2 issued an invitation as well as an order under the MBIS                  3 to the Incorporated Owners of Wang Fuk Court. The MBIS                  4 notice applies to buildings that are 30 years old or                  5 above, unless the relevant private residential buildings                  6 are less than three storeys high. As mentioned, there                  7 are works that need to be carried out under the MBIS,                  8 and this kind of works are different from large-scale                  9 construction works that involve the redevelopment of                  10 buildings. So this kind of works are relatively simple                  11 and they are governed under section 41 of the Buildings                  12 Ordinance, which concern mostly minor works.                  13 The purpose of this legislation is to provide a                  14 simple mechanism so that residents can carry out simple                  15 minor works. Under this mechanism, prior to the                  16 commencement of this kind of minor works, no permission                  17 is required from the building authority, that is the                  18 Buildings Department does not have to approve the                  19 relevant building plans and no relevant permission has                  20 to be obtained.                  21 However, for new buildings that have to be                  22 constructed or built, they have to first obtain the                  23 approval from the Buildings Department in relation to                  24 the building plans.                  25 Now, the leading counsel in his opening submission</p>
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<p>1 take part in the development or the building of public                  2 housing. Therefore, in relation to organisations or                  3 units, for example, the ICU under the Housing Authority,                  4 which is more familiar with the building works in                  5 Hong Kong, shoulder this kind of responsibility.                  6 Wang Fuk Court is an HOS estate and the residential                  7 units involved could be sold on the private market.                  8 Therefore, Wang Fuk Court's units are governed under the                  9 Buildings Ordinance.                  10 In relation to law enforcement, the ICU, instead of                  11 the Housing Department, is responsible for the relevant                  12 regulation work. So on regulatory issues, concerning                  13 Wang Fuk Court, the ICU has to be made responsible                  14 because its duty is to supervise minor works as well as                  15 to inspect any construction works.                  16 At the same time, the Housing Department has to, in                  17 accordance with the Buildings Ordinance, make any                  18 prosecutions. Also, the Buildings Department has to                  19 regulate any registered professionals. The two                  20 departments are responsible for two different kinds of                  21 work. In 2014, Wang Fuk Court was chosen as one of the                  22 targeted estates under the MBIS, and the ICU in                  23 April 2014 issued an MBIS notice or circular under the                  24 MBIS.                  25 In June 2016, according to section 30B of the</p>	<p>1 also mentioned about issues concerning minor works. We                  2 see that there are extensive media reports about this as                  3 well. This regime is called Minor Works Control System,                  4 or MWCS. This system was launched in May 2010 and the                  5 purpose was that, be it large-scale construction works                  6 or minor works that need to be carried out within                  7 residential units, such as installing hanging rods, you                  8 have to comply with a set of stringent standards, that                  9 is, you have to get the approval from the Buildings                  10 Department concerning the plans and you also need to                  11 have a professional to supervise the works.                  12 Because of the fees incurred and the time required,                  13 some people may not get the pre-approval from the                  14 building authority before they commenced the works, and                  15 because of this, that is because some people neglect the                  16 law, for minor works that were subject to stringent                  17 regulation, there were problems that arose because of                  18 regulatory problems and there were a lot of unauthorised                  19 building works. Therefore, such Minor Works Control                  20 System was put in place.                  21 Under MWCS, while minor works are different from                  22 large-scale works, there are three classes of minor                  23 works. The leading counsel has explained this. For                  24 class I, they are relatively more complex minor works,                  25 that is, for example, you have to build an indoor</p>

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<p>1 staircase within a building; class II, they concern                  2 minor works that are of lower risk, for example, you may                  3 have to repair facades or external walls that are not                  4 load-bearing; and class III concern, for example,                  5 hanging rods as well as structures that hold                  6 air-conditioners for residential units.</p> <p>7 The definition of minor works depend on the nature                  8 of the works. For example, if you have to build                  9 a staircase within a building or a hanging rack, then it                  10 is defined as minor works. It is not defined based on                  11 the number of units involved. If the nature is                  12 relatively simple and with the supervision of                  13 professionals, it is believed that such mechanism can                  14 offer enough safeguard to protect public safety.</p> <p>15 While the residential units involved in the Wang Fuk                  16 Court project involve quite a huge number, compared with                  17 large-scale construction works, the works concerned are                  18 relatively simpler, so they are considered as minor                  19 works.</p> <p>20 MWCS features four major parts. First, it features                  21 a simple procedure, that is building owners do not have                  22 to obtain prior approval from the Buildings Department                  23 before they launch the relevant project. Under this                  24 mechanism, costs can be saved for building owners. This                  25 was supported by LegCo members as well as the community</p>	<p>1 information as a starting point.</p> <p>2 Before the Wang Fuk Court fire, there were different                  3 kinds of works being carried out and they are of the                  4 nature of minor works. In relation to the regulation of                  5 minor works as mentioned, we had to depend on the                  6 self-discipline of the relevant sectors to reduce the                  7 intervention as well as approval work of the Government.</p> <p>8 The Committee may have a question in mind, that is,                  9 when large-scale repair works are carried out, should                  10 regulation be stepped up in order to ensure construction                  11 safety? It could be a systemic issue. And in order to                  12 decide whether it is a systemic issue, we have to draw                  13 reference to the historical background of the system.</p> <p>14 Concerning the Wang Fuk Court fire, we have to stick                  15 to the historical background because there was logic to                  16 why these mechanisms were in place. In relation to the                  17 details concerning the regulation of the works, we could                  18 hear from the evidence later.</p> <p>19 In the meantime, the government has started to drive                  20 reform in the following direction. In future, for                  21 class I minor works, apart from registered                  22 professionals, that is these minor works have to be                  23 carried out by a registered contractor, and on top of                  24 a third party independent professional has to be engaged                  25 to provide a plan to the ICU as well as to the Buildings</p>
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<p>1 at large.</p> <p>2 Second, minor works depend on the self-discipline of                  3 the relevant sectors as well as relevant professionals;                  4 we call them "prescribed building professionals", PBP.                  5 Prescribed registered minor works contractors are also                  6 part of this. We rely on their professional regulation                  7 and supervision. For minor works this is to reduce the                  8 intervention of the Government which include any                  9 inspections or approval conducted by the Government.                  10 This is the core part of the regime.</p> <p>11 Third, in order to ensure the quality of the                  12 inspection of buildings professionals, be it MBIS works                  13 or MWCS works, under both mechanisms there is                  14 a registration system for professionals. If the                  15 relevant registered professionals did not take up the                  16 responsibility, they could be subject to disciplinary                  17 actions. Since the commencement of the Minor Works                  18 Control System, the submission has increased from 35,000                  19 to about 150,000 in relation to the carrying out of                  20 minor works. This shows that since the launch of the                  21 Minor Works Control System, it is widely accepted by the                  22 sector and that it is of high reference value.</p> <p>23 So we have to further examine the responsibility of                  24 the relevant professionals, but when we do so, we have                  25 to at least understand the background of the above</p>	<p>1 Department, that is a third party independent                  2 professional will have to submit the plan to detail and                  3 set out the prevention and precautionary measures. We                  4 call it a site supervision plan and it will set out the                  5 deployment of supervisory personnel, and the Buildings                  6 Department in the future will, in accordance with the                  7 plans submitted, step up inspection as well as approval.</p> <p>8 Of course the Committee will scrutinise this measure                  9 proposed. Here, I'd like to mention that leading                  10 counsel in his opening submission talked about the work                  11 of the ICU and I'd like to clarify the relevant points                  12 here.</p> <p>13 One of the points touched on is about the                  14 percentage. I believe Committee members still remember                  15 that last week the leading counsel said that the Housing                  16 Department was subject to a 20 per cent percentage and                  17 the IC was subject to a 0.1 per cent.</p> <p>18 Before I make clarification, perhaps I have to                  19 explain a little bit about the background.</p> <p>20 Under the MBIS there are, as mentioned, three                  21 classes of minor works. Back then, only class I minor                  22 works required prescribed professionals or prescribed                  23 registered contractors to sign on relevant plans and the                  24 works procedure or the materials to be used do not have                  25 to go through the regulatory departments for approval.</p>

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<p>1 The regulatory departments will only conduct random 2 sampling check on the documents submitted after the 3 launch of the works and, under the same mechanism, 4 on-site inspection will also be conducted. 5 Based on these different inspection mechanisms, the 6 ICU would then give you further details. But then 7 I would just like to simply go through them. There are 8 three types. One is on audit fundamental check. We can 9 call this AFC. This AFC does not involve any on-site 10 inspection. ICU in 2025 conducted 1,760 AFCs. The 11 percentage is about 4.3. The second type is done after 12 completion of works. It's called site audit check, or 13 SAC. So this would be done upon completion of the 14 works. 15 To inspect whether the completed work is in 16 accordance with what was listed in the paperwork, in 17 2025 the ICU conducted 224 SACs, that's around 18 0.8 per cent. The third type is inspection done before 19 work begins. That's called PAC. So that is carried out 20 before the works begin. 21 Every year there are about 25 cases that would 22 account for about 0.1 per cent. That is to ensure that 23 the contractors are not carrying out works before the 24 inspections because they can only carry out works after 25 inspection is completed in seven days. So that targets</p>	<p>1 According to the ICU mechanism, ICU has been 2 following the mechanism and there is no need for the ICU 3 to proactively conduct on-site inspections in relation 4 to the Wang Fuk minor works. Paperwork might be checked 5 through the pre-works documents and there may be SACs 6 conducted, which is to say that the inspections done 7 during that time were mainly because of being responsive 8 to residents' complaints. 9 So this is the circumstances during that time. 10 The Committee may question whether the number of 11 inspections are adequate and members can analyse the 12 figures objectively to see whether the number of random 13 inspections made are adequate. 14 I spent some time just now to clarify the monitoring 15 system in relation to MBIS and MWCS. ICU has also been 16 monitoring the Wang Fuk minor works and the Labour 17 Department and the FSD have also been monitoring under 18 their own remit. Whether it be in Hong Kong or 19 elsewhere in the world, be it the government or within 20 other stakeholders, there would of course be a certain 21 degree of division of work. The question here is not 22 whether there should be division of work, but how the 23 work could be done better. So that is an area which the 24 Committee can further look into. 25 In the fourth part I would like to talk about the</p>
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<p>1 whether contractors would carry out works before the 2 inspections are completed. 3 As for those works that need the AFC, that's under 4 class I of site supervision work, the Buildings 5 Department would then select about 20 per cent of this 6 to further inspect. So, within this small percentage, 7 another 20 per cent would be selected to conduct these 8 checks. 9 Last week, the leading counsel mentioned that the 10 ICU only conducted 25 PACs, and that is 0.1 per cent. 11 Compared to the target of 20 per cent by the BD, that is 12 not very suitable because we are talking about two 13 different kinds of inspections. So we should not 14 actually compare the two numbers. According to the ICU, 15 if we look at the numbers from the BD, every year when 16 they check whether any works are carried out before 17 inspection, they would conduct about 100 checks. 18 Compared to minor works, that's only 0.1 per cent. 19 If we are talking about carrying out works before 20 inspection is conducted, then that number is comparable 21 to the number given by BD. The 20 per cent figure is 22 actually for class I minor works that have already 23 submitted AFCs, and that number, as I said, is less than 24 20 per cent. So the ICU has already been complying with 25 all the standards of the Buildings Department.</p>	<p>1 cause of the Wang Fuk fire. Of course we will also have 2 to wait for the expert witness statements and evidence 3 before we can draw any conclusions, but we can see that 4 this fire has brought along many injuries and deaths, 5 and we can look at some of the direct causes to see 6 whether they are causes which were brought by the 7 system. 8 Last Friday the leading counsel mentioned that in 9 some of the papers it seems that the BD and ICU have 10 emphasised many points that under the current system we 11 rely solely on contractors to take up responsibility on 12 works. Of course we hope that the contractors could be 13 more self-disciplined and that there could be a strong 14 monitoring system. This, however, does not mean that 15 the monitoring parties of the government could just 16 leave things be. We need to point out that some people 17 might be trying to shed responsibility and they might be 18 trying to cut cost and that has led to this tragedy. 19 According to some of the evidence shown last week, 20 a direct cause of the Wang Fuk inferno could be 21 behaviour of workers such as illegal smoking or ignoring 22 some of the standardised procedures or trying to use 23 substandard materials or evade responsibility or RIs 24 being sort of like a rubberstamp. 25 We will have to wait for more evidence to be shown</p>

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1 when the witnesses give their statements. We must treat  
 2 this fire very seriously. We were not able to make use  
 3 of opportunities to prevent this fire from happening and  
 4 so this shows there are some inadequacies in the  
 5 legislature.  
 6 From 2023 to 2025, we have seen a number of cases of  
 7 fire in relation to scaffolding nets. The different  
 8 departments should learn from those experiences and try  
 9 to prevent these fires from happening again, such as  
 10 making sure that the materials used in such works are up  
 11 to standard and there is a strong monitoring system and  
 12 that inspections are made on time. All these measures  
 13 could have helped us avoid the fire. Even it might not  
 14 have stopped the fire, it might have minimised the  
 15 tragedy and so we must learn from this and try to make  
 16 sure that similar tragedies do not happen again.  
 17 As to whether there are inadequacies from the side  
 18 of the Government, then the Committee can draw  
 19 conclusions after listening to the evidence and to the  
 20 witness statements. The leading counsel presented part  
 21 of the evidence in his opening submission. He hopes  
 22 that all those involved would know that their evidence  
 23 is very important, but some people have been misled into  
 24 believing that the Committee has already come to  
 25 a conclusion. Some media have even given names or

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1 analysed the contents and then doxxed some of those  
 2 mentioned and their family members. I hope, as evidence  
 3 has not been presented and witnesses have not given  
 4 their statements, that we do not draw to any early  
 5 conclusions at the moment.  
 6 The Government must also then clarify some of the  
 7 allegations because we do not want the public to be  
 8 misled into believing that conclusions have already been  
 9 drawn.  
 10 I may not be able to clarify everything, I just want  
 11 to touch on some of the important facts.  
 12 First of all, the leading counsel on the first day  
 13 of the opening submission on Thursday said that ICU,  
 14 after receiving complaints, conducted an on-site  
 15 inspection and contacted the RI via WhatsApp in advance  
 16 on the inspection date and time. Should the ICU conduct  
 17 a surprise check after receiving a complaint is  
 18 something that has been questioned.  
 19 Many WhatsApp messages were shown to us on the  
 20 communication between the RI and ICU, and that person  
 21 was then said to be in collusion by the media right  
 22 after. We believe that this does not represent the  
 23 fact. ICU asked about the inspection date in advance  
 24 because they needed the RI to be present on the day of  
 25 inspection to provide assistance, and according to ICU's

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1 current understanding, the Buildings Department may also  
 2 want to make an appointment with the RI before.  
 3 Having the RI present at the time of inspection  
 4 could help answer their questions immediately on the  
 5 spot and the RI can also judge whether the complaint is  
 6 substantial. And they would only communicate the day  
 7 before the inspection. They already tried to shorten  
 8 the time.  
 9 We hope that the Committee and everyone else would  
 10 stay objective and to see whether these allegations of  
 11 collusion are really grounded.  
 12 Secondly, on the first day of the opening  
 13 submission, the leading counsel said that ICU, on  
 14 18 November 2024, conducted an on-site inspection and  
 15 only selected inspection of a very small part of the  
 16 scaffolding net to be inspected and it's very easily  
 17 accessible. Well, objectively speaking, the Committee  
 18 should consider that ICU gave notification in the  
 19 morning and they went on site in the afternoon. Is  
 20 there really enough time for the RN and RC to collude  
 21 within a short period of time is something to be  
 22 colluded. And even though the inspection is only being  
 23 done at the ground floor of the building or at the top  
 24 of the roof of the building, we are seeing a large  
 25 service area of scaffolding net, and the Committee can

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1 think about whether the RI and RC have already  
 2 considered which part of the scaffolding net they are  
 3 going to test. These details could then be shown when  
 4 witnesses give their statements.  
 5 Thirdly, on the second day of the opening  
 6 submissions of the counsel for the IC, complaints were  
 7 received through 1823, suspecting the use of Styrofoam  
 8 to cover the windows in Wang Fuk Court. An email was  
 9 sent in reply. Without conducting any tests, it was  
 10 learned that the contractor was using fire-retardant  
 11 styrofoam materials to cover the windows. We are going  
 12 to look into the situation later on.  
 13 However, this version of events might be cause to  
 14 understand that the officials made a perfunctory reply.  
 15 It is hoped that the Independent Committee will take  
 16 into account the witness statements that have already  
 17 been submitted, as well as the testimony that the  
 18 witnesses are going to provide during the evidential  
 19 hearings.  
 20 In fact, for the witness statements provided by the  
 21 ICU, on 8 October 2024 they inspected the site at  
 22 Wang Fuk Court. At that time, ICU staff members  
 23 mentioned there was no specific fire-retardant  
 24 requirement. However, at the same time, it was pointed  
 25 out that the styrofoam board might cause fire risks.

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<p>1 Will contractors use of fire-retardant styrofoam boards?  2 There were enquiries made. Follow-up was also  3 conducted. Our representatives already said they will  4 use non-flammable styrofoam board to cover the windows  5 for protection. They will also do so layer by layer.  6 On 28 October, during the inspection, the styrofoam  7 boards concerned were not yet plastered on the windows.  8 That is why, from the perspective of ICU staff members,  9 there was no way to know that the RC or the contractors  10 would be using such boards on long-term basis to cover  11 the windows. Therefore, no follow-up work was  12 conducted.  13 On 12 November, the ICU made a reply in relation to  14 the complaint. The IC should consider whether this only  15 shows the understanding of the ICU regarding the  16 non-retardant requirement. It was from the contractor.  17 Regarding the details of other follow-up work of the  18 ICU, this would be furnished when the witnesses testify.  19 The above are the aspects where the public might  20 misunderstand. These are our responses in relation to  21 these aspects: the ICU conducted fire-retardant tests at  22 the scene as well as its considerations; and the ICU's  23 understanding of access openings being used, as seen  24 from the pictures; as well as following the inspection  25 of Labour Department, written replies were submitted.</p>	<p>1 this year. They provided preliminary conclusions on the  2 causes and spread of the fire. Although we don't have  3 any means to model what had happened at the scene,  4 members of the task force used different means to  5 simulate what had happened during the fire. They tried  6 to uncover the truth as far as possible. They used  7 a lot of different methods, including a large model to  8 test different construction materials. The aim was to  9 assess the combustion properties of the materials as  10 well as the impact on the spread of fire. This is an  11 important element in the investigation.  12 In the interim report, the scaffolding net  13 construction was also analysed. It is preliminarily  14 known that the structure and layout of the scaffolding  15 net exacerbated the chimney effect. The light well also  16 contributed to the skyward rise of the fire. That is  17 why the blaze rose from the ground floor to the rooftop  18 of the building. This caused the situation to spiral  19 out of control.  20 The interdepartmental Fire Investigation Task Force  21 will continue to conduct analyses, including analysing  22 the causes of the fire, as well as fluid mechanics and  23 fluid dynamics. This May the report will be finished  24 and it will also be provided to the IC as soon as  25 possible.</p>
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<p>1 All these warrant more in-depth exploration. They might  2 reveal even more systemic reforms needed.  3 I urge the public to stay more patient. Don't make  4 any premature judgment. We need to wait for both sides  5 to provide evidence before we make any conclusion.  6 Regarding the causes of the fire, we'd like to  7 introduce a witness, Prof Yuen from CityU. He is an  8 eminent professor. His research of interest covers fire  9 safety as well as construction, combustion, fluid  10 mechanics, computer models and so on. All these are  11 highly relevant to our topics concerned. Prof Yuen will  12 also speak based on his expertise. He will also submit  13 expert report and attend evidential hearings as  14 required. Prof Yuen exercises his responsibilities. He  15 will stay objective and independent in helping the IC.  16 He will provide impartial expert opinions.  17 On 28 November 2025, that is two days after the fire  18 took place, an interdepartmental Fire Investigation Task  19 Force led by the FSD was set up, comprising  20 representative from the Police Force, EMSD, Buildings  21 Department, Independent Checking Unit under the Housing  22 Bureau, Labour Department, government laboratory, as  23 well as fire engineering professionals.  24 The interdepartmental Fire Investigation Task Force  25 released their interim investigation report in February</p>	<p>1 Next, I'm turning to the fifth part of our  2 submissions, that is the immediate measures implemented  3 by the Government as well as the road forward. We  4 understand that this blaze has revealed the deficiencies  5 of the existing mechanism. As I already said at the  6 start of my opening submissions, the onus is on the  7 Government to improve the system. We must prevent  8 tragedies from happening again. The Government has  9 already taken proactive measures; medium to long-term  10 measures have already been launched in order to address  11 the situation. Even before the report of the IC is  12 published, we will race against the clock to make  13 improvements as far as possible.  14 Regarding immediate measures, in December 2025, the  15 FSD set up a quick response team. It works on  16 a round-the-clock basis. It responds to building fire,  17 inspecting fire services installations. If need be,  18 this unit will take law enforcement actions when needed.  19 The FSD has deployed resources right away to set up  20 a task force. This dedicated task force looks into  21 buildings undergoing renovation works. Since January  22 this year, the FSD has introduced targeted measures to  23 strengthen alerts on fire services installation  24 failures. It requires all registered fire services  25 installation contractors, when shutting down the fire</p>

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<p>1 services installations, to fulfil their obligations, at                  2 the same time to identify, assess and report the                  3 cascading effects on other installations. It also needs                  4 to disclose the impairment of FSI to the building's                  5 owners, occupants and property management companies so                  6 that they are informed of the situation.                  7 At the same time, there are new requirements of                  8 affixing seals and management standards. Seals in                  9 either blue or green will have to be affixed to the                  10 power switches according to the power supply status of                  11 the FSI.                  12 The Buildings Department has conducted an operation                  13 and inspected a total of 400 private buildings                  14 undergoing large-scale maintenance works with                  15 scaffolding erected. Samples have been sent to the                  16 government laboratory for tests.                  17 Notices have been sent to require the submission of                  18 certificates and reports on scaffolding nets or                  19 protective screens on the external walls of buildings.                  20 On 3 December 2025, for buildings undergoing                  21 large-scale renovation works, within three days these                  22 scaffolding nets needed to be taken down. Practice note                  23 for registered contractors No. 85 was also promulgated                  24 in December 2025. It required that fire-retardant                  25 performance test reports needed to be obtained and such</p>	<p>1 two, day-to-day inspections; three, law enforcement                  2 actions; and four, emergency response.                  3 In these four aspects, systemic improvements will be                  4 made to the interdepartmental collaboration                  5 arrangements.                  6 Chairman and members, the Government understands,                  7 after the fact-finding exercise by the IC, systemic                  8 reform suggestions will be made. The Government                  9 welcomes and looks forward to the suggestions to be made                  10 by the IC. The Government will seriously follow up on                  11 your recommendations.                  12 Regarding some of the suggested recommendations such                  13 as limiting the scale of works, procedures, compliant                  14 requirements of construction materials and enhanced                  15 approval requirements having regard to the scale of                  16 works, all these might have an impact on construction                  17 time, costs and so on. The Government departments may                  18 have to conduct consultation with stakeholders as well                  19 as other people in the community for consensus.                  20 Chairman and members, the Government would like to                  21 once again emphasise the attitude of the Government. We                  22 are sincere, we remain open and we will fully                  23 collaborate with the IC. Through this investigation, we                  24 expect to learn a lesson from this heavy and serious                  25 incident. We will also step up supervision to carry out</p>
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<p>1 reports and tests needed to be conducted by designated                  2 units approved by the government. A sample check system                  3 was also in place. We aim to reduce the risk of                  4 scaffolding nets on fire.                  5 A citywide special operation was also mounted. It                  6 covers the fire prevention facilities and fire response                  7 arrangements. At the start of our opening submissions,                  8 we have detailed different measures. These cut across                  9 different policy bureaus and remits of different                  10 bureaus.                  11 The salient points are as follows: one, amending the                  12 Buildings Ordinance, upgrading minor works from class II                  13 to class I. The relevant regulatory requirements will                  14 also be enhanced. Prosecution mechanisms over                  15 construction materials will also be enhanced. Enhanced                  16 penalties and enhanced sanctions will also be put in                  17 place. For the switching down of fire services systems,                  18 approval will have to be obtained from the FSD instead                  19 of just informing the FSD. Property management                  20 companies will also be introduced and they have to be                  21 held liable to renovation works, and hence Smart Tender                  22 whether also be put in place to reduce the risk of                  23 bid-rigging.                  24 Apart from that, different government departments                  25 will also work on four aspects: one, policy formulation;</p>	<p>1 meaningful systemic reforms.                  2 Thank you, chairman, thank you, members.                  3 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Jenkin Suen SC.                  4 It is time for us to take a morning break. Other                  5 parties will speak. The next party, the Urban Renewal                  6 Authority. Which party wants to speak next? By the                  7 Competition Commission or ISS EP, which party would like                  8 to speak first?                  9 MR KHAW: I can start first so that we can save some time                  10 discussing the details.                  11 CHAIRMAN: All right. Urban Renewal Authority. Other                  12 parties? Mr Victor Dawes?                  13 MR DAWES: The legal representative of Hop On may have to                  14 speak this afternoon. Probably we can start the                  15 submissions of other parties first.                  16 CHAIRMAN: All right. We will start with Urban Renewal                  17 Authority, ISS, Competition Commission and then Hop On.                  18 All right. It's time for our morning break.                  19 10 minutes.                  20 (11.18 am)                  21 (A short adjournment)                  22 (11.30 am)                  23 CHAIRMAN: Senior counsel from the URA, please.                  24 Opening submissions by MR LUI                  25 MR LUI: Chairman and members.</p>

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<p>1 First, on behalf of the URA as well as its legal 2 team, I'd like to extend my deepest condolences to the 3 victims and affected families of Wang Fuk Court. The 4 URA team would like to solemnly undertake that we will, 5 in a practical, pragmatic and humble manner, help the 6 Committee complete its investigation. We will also 7 propose any enhancement measures.</p> <p>8 The public may have a question in mind, that is the 9 role of the URA in the Wang Fuk Court fire, as well as 10 the level of participation of the URA in the incident. 11 In my submission, I will touch on the above points.</p> <p>12 I would like to stress the things that we have to 13 bear in mind in the hearing is that one duty of the URA 14 is to facilitate building rehabilitation. Since 15 establishment of the URA in 2001, it's been 25 years, 16 the statutory responsibility of the URA is to promote 17 building rehabilitation. Through providing financial 18 resources as well as technical support, we encourage 19 building owners to carry out maintenance and repair 20 works.</p> <p>21 I'd like to stress one point. In relation to 22 building repair and maintenance, the URA plays a role as 23 a facilitator only. In 2011, the government promulgated 24 the Urban Renewal Strategy. It is a policy of the 25 government. The URA, as well as the relevant</p>	<p>1 conduct a tender process. We helped collect expressions 2 of interest as well as we collect tender documents, and 3 the entire process was conducted by an independent 4 accounting firm. This is to ensure that the relevant 5 identities of the bidders will not be exposed and this 6 is to ensure fairness and impartiality.</p> <p>7 We got positive feedback about this system. 8 Therefore, in May 2016 we rolled out the Smart Tender 9 scheme. Relying on the basis of the previous system 10 I mentioned, we provide enhanced support. In 2018, on 11 2 February, the IO of Wang Fuk Court applied for the 12 Smart Tender service. In 2018, the URA distributed the 13 DIY tool-kit.</p> <p>14 We provide three kinds of support under the Smart 15 Tender scheme. First, electronic tendering platform. 16 This platform allows all interested parties as well as 17 qualified contractors to provide and submit their bids.</p> <p>18 Second, we provide tendering services. We provide 19 central collection boxes that provide security services 20 and we ensure that there are registered accountants to 21 open the bids.</p> <p>22 Thirdly, you can see from the screen that the part 23 from opening and closing the bids, we provide 24 independent consultancy services. The URA arranges for 25 third party independent consultants to provide advice to</p>
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<p>1 stakeholders, help implement the strategy. The URA must 2 follow the Urban Renewal Strategy. Under the policy 3 framework, as well as at the policy level, the URA has 4 always played a role as a facilitator only.</p> <p>5 At the legal level, under the URA Ordinance, the URA 6 duty does not cover participating directly in the 7 building rehabilitation work of private residential 8 buildings.</p> <p>9 Last Friday, it was mentioned by leading counsel 10 that the URA only is responsible for the administrative 11 work, and this is the truth, because we abide by the 12 existing legal framework.</p> <p>13 We helped building owners carry out the tender 14 process and we noticed that there were unscrupulous 15 elements who tried to manipulate the tender process, for 16 example, only some parties got the tender documents. 17 Also through illegal means some contractors, after 18 submitting their bids, they forced other contractors to 19 withdraw their bids. Also there were redacted parts as 20 well as parts that were manipulated or amended by 21 unscrupulous elements. Therefore, in 2013, the URA 22 started to provide a tender service for building owners 23 that need to carry out maintenance works.</p> <p>24 Tender process was the responsibility of IO's, but 25 then the URA started to appoint accounting firms to</p>	<p>1 help building owners scrutinise the reports and 2 documents they receive from consultants, and during the 3 tender process we provide fee estimates for the 4 reference of building owners. Independent consultants, 5 based on the tender assessment report drafted, provide 6 advice to building owners to help them select the 7 suitable contractor.</p> <p>8 We arranged for RS Surveyors for the IO of Wang Fuk 9 Court to be the independent consultant. In March 2018, 10 we provided an agreement to the IO of Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>11 Generally speaking, building maintenance works cover 12 three major areas. First, authorised persons as well as 13 registered inspectors have to carry out inspections. 14 Second, registered inspectors have to, in their capacity 15 as an engineering consultant, provide services to 16 building owners. Third, registered contractors have to 17 carry out maintenance works. In the Wang Fuk Court 18 case, of course Prestige Construction is the contractor 19 and Will Power is the registered inspector and they, in 20 the capacity of an engineering consultant, was appointed 21 by the building owners.</p> <p>22 So what is the role of the URA as an independent 23 consultant? You can see from the screen that in 2018 we 24 provide points to note on information to building 25 owners. On page 5 of this document it shows the</p>

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<p>1 participation and role of the independent consultant.</p> <p>2 This is the flowchart in the document. On the</p> <p>3 left-hand side it shows the procedures that need to be</p> <p>4 carried out by IOs, and on the right-hand side it shows</p> <p>5 the workflow under the Smart Tender scheme. First, the</p> <p>6 successful applicant signs a service agreement with the</p> <p>7 URA and, based on the works that need to be carried out,</p> <p>8 the URA provide a rough estimate. Afterwards, the</p> <p>9 successful applicant would engage an authorised person</p> <p>10 or a registered inspector. After this procedure is</p> <p>11 completed, the independent consultant of Smart Tender</p> <p>12 will, based on the inspection reports as well as tender</p> <p>13 assessment report, provide an estimate of the costs</p> <p>14 incurred to the applicant.</p> <p>15 On the left-hand side it shows that the successful</p> <p>16 applicant will have to engage a contractor, and that is</p> <p>17 Prestige Construction, an engineer in this case.</p> <p>18 Afterwards, we will make use of the electronic platform</p> <p>19 for the tender exercise. Afterwards, of course, the</p> <p>20 applicant will pick the contractor they prefer, and</p> <p>21 before building owners vote, the independent consultant</p> <p>22 will, based on the tender analysis, provide advice to</p> <p>23 the applicant. After the advice is provided, the Smart</p> <p>24 Tender services will be complete.</p> <p>25 After understanding the flow, I would like to</p>	<p>1 not included early on.</p> <p>2 The URA has always emphasised that it would not</p> <p>3 interfere with the OCs in the appointment of</p> <p>4 contractors. The URA acts as a facilitator to assist</p> <p>5 OCs to select their contractors, but we do not</p> <p>6 proactively participate in the selection and we do not</p> <p>7 make any decisions for the owners. The URA will not</p> <p>8 incline towards any party and the URA remains neutral.</p> <p>9 I would like to show you page 6 of the notes for</p> <p>10 application. On the screen you would see under</p> <p>11 declaration of points to note in application, under</p> <p>12 point 8.1 it says that the URA service is to assist</p> <p>13 successful applicants in appointing individual</p> <p>14 professionals and to act as an agent or as a</p> <p>15 facilitator, and the URA will not take the place of the</p> <p>16 role and responsibilities of the successful applicant.</p> <p>17 8.2, the URA will not interfere with the owner's</p> <p>18 decision. The owners can pick their own candidates, and</p> <p>19 during the process if the owners find that there is any</p> <p>20 unfairness, then they can reflect it to the URA. So</p> <p>21 that has always been the policy of the URA. And based</p> <p>22 on limited resources, the URA could not proactively</p> <p>23 participate in repair works, including vetting the</p> <p>24 materials provided by the bidders.</p> <p>25 The URA does not have any human resources to</p>
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<p>1 emphasise a few points. First of all, for Wang Fuk</p> <p>2 Court --</p> <p>3 CHAIRMAN: I would like to ask, Mr Lui, is this flowchart in</p> <p>4 the paper?</p> <p>5 MR LUI: Yes, it is. This is actually on page 381 of URA.</p> <p>6 I can say a couple more points here. So this is</p> <p>7 actually the workflow in 2018. Starting from 2016, the</p> <p>8 URA has been expanding this service platform and the</p> <p>9 service scope. This leads me to my next point.</p> <p>10 On Wang Fuk Court, the URA did not participate in</p> <p>11 appointing Will Power. So this was not actually done</p> <p>12 through Smart Tender. The IO, when they applied for</p> <p>13 a Smart Tender, Smart Tender only provided the e-tender</p> <p>14 system to help them appoint a contractor, which is</p> <p>15 actually PC&amp;E. On the first page of this pamphlet,</p> <p>16 you will see that as Smart Tender is actually a paid</p> <p>17 service, and this is a service scheme with a view to</p> <p>18 offering assistance to owners, organisations in building</p> <p>19 rehabilitation works with an electronic tendering</p> <p>20 platform to facilitate procurement of AI or RI and</p> <p>21 qualified registered contractors to carry out</p> <p>22 maintenance works for the building.</p> <p>23 At that time, it didn't include registered</p> <p>24 contractors. It was only in 2018 that the Smart Tender</p> <p>25 service extended to consultants because consultants were</p>	<p>1 proactively join in repair works. On the screen you</p> <p>2 would see that during 2018 to 2019, all the way to 2023</p> <p>3 and 2024, the number of cases to be carried out via</p> <p>4 Smart Tender, you would see that in this quarter there's</p> <p>5 actually four times the number of cases, so from 1,760</p> <p>6 cases in 2018 to 6,841 cases in 2023.</p> <p>7 Before the third quarter of 2024, the URA can show</p> <p>8 that there are about 120 case officers, with each</p> <p>9 officer handling around 57 cases at different stages</p> <p>10 concurrently. So there really is limited resources at</p> <p>11 the URA.</p> <p>12 Last Friday, the leading counsel pointed out the</p> <p>13 litigation records provided by PC&amp;E. These were</p> <p>14 actually confirmed by a law firm. The leading counsel</p> <p>15 said that the URA just accepted all the records provided</p> <p>16 by PC&amp;E. We do not agree with that because Will Power</p> <p>17 in that tender is only one out of 57.</p> <p>18 We hope that when you are looking at the stance of</p> <p>19 URA you will understand the limits there are on the</p> <p>20 framework of URA and the role URA plays. We believe</p> <p>21 that you should not infer that URA has not done its job</p> <p>22 properly. URA believes that everyone should remain</p> <p>23 unbiased in understanding the policies and in execution</p> <p>24 of all the details. Only by doing that can we really</p> <p>25 look into all the inadequacies and come up with remedial</p>

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<p>1 measures.</p> <p>2 Owners may face collusion and once again it leads us</p> <p>3 in looking at bid-rigging cases. We really must try to</p> <p>4 strengthen Smart Tender and to provide better services.</p> <p>5 We are looking into upgrading Smart Tender and the news</p> <p>6 has already given us a preliminary report on the updates</p> <p>7 we are going to take upon.</p> <p>8 Even with a better enhanced Smart Tender, it may not</p> <p>9 stop all bid-rigging and it cannot be seen as a panacea</p> <p>10 for bid-rigging. There are many different procedures in</p> <p>11 minor works repair with many parties involved. The URA</p> <p>12 does not have the authority to investigate and the URA</p> <p>13 alone cannot handle false declarations or violations on</p> <p>14 its own. To really remedy the situation, we need to try</p> <p>15 to enhance our workflow. We hope that the Government,</p> <p>16 owners and monitoring systems can try to enhance and</p> <p>17 provide us with remedial measures going forward. Thank</p> <p>18 you.</p> <p>19 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Lui.</p> <p>20 Now I would like to invite ISS.</p> <p>21 Opening submissions by MR KHAW</p> <p>22 MR KHAW: Chairman and members, I, together with Mr Ho and</p> <p>23 Mr Yeung, speak on behalf of ISS EastPoint Properties</p> <p>24 Ltd. I will now call it as ISS or "the management</p> <p>25 company" from now on.</p>	<p>1 leading counsel talked about the fire service pump rooms</p> <p>2 where ISS sent out staff to provide assistance.</p> <p>3 Thirdly, on the day of the fire and the measures</p> <p>4 taken by the management company.</p> <p>5 Starting with the first part, ISS began acting as</p> <p>6 the management company of Wang Fuk Court from 1997.</p> <p>7 According to the latest management agreement, the term</p> <p>8 of hiring is for three years, from 2023 to end of 2025.</p> <p>9 What we do is similar to what other management companies</p> <p>10 do in Hong Kong, but there are a few points I'd like to</p> <p>11 highlight here.</p> <p>12 First of all, starting from May 2024, Wang Fuk Court</p> <p>13 started its renovation works. We know that the IO has</p> <p>14 appointed Will Power as its consultant with PC&amp;E as its</p> <p>15 main contractor. So all the work and its supervision is</p> <p>16 done by them. The management company will just work</p> <p>17 with them when there is such a need.</p> <p>18 On fire services installation, the management</p> <p>19 company has appointed Victory Fire as the registered</p> <p>20 fire services installation contractor to maintain and</p> <p>21 repair fire services installation, including fire</p> <p>22 alarms, emergency lighting, fire hose system and fire</p> <p>23 extinguishers, et cetera.</p> <p>24 In order not to cause a confusion between the</p> <p>25 Chinese names, I would just call Victory Fire by its</p>
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<p>1 On behalf of ISS and the whole legal team, I would</p> <p>2 like to once again express my condolences to the</p> <p>3 families affected and our deepest sympathies to every</p> <p>4 family affected. ISS totally understands that the</p> <p>5 investigation is very important and that it is totally</p> <p>6 in public interest.</p> <p>7 Since the Independent Committee began its work, ISS,</p> <p>8 from the management level to frontline staff, has</p> <p>9 assisted with the investigation very seriously. And up</p> <p>10 to now, ISS has already provided two rounds of written</p> <p>11 submissions and provided seven witness statements.</p> <p>12 These statements have already been submitted.</p> <p>13 In the evidential hearing, ISS will continue to work</p> <p>14 with the investigation. We will fully cooperate with</p> <p>15 and assist all parties. We will listen carefully and</p> <p>16 reflect throughout the investigation. We hope that</p> <p>17 through the hearing we will be able to learn from the</p> <p>18 experience to see how improvements can be made to ensure</p> <p>19 that this tragedy would not occur again.</p> <p>20 I will mainly speak in three parts. First of all,</p> <p>21 I would like to talk about the mechanism of our</p> <p>22 management company, including arrangement of fire</p> <p>23 services installation and the role ISS plays in Wang Fuk</p> <p>24 Court.</p> <p>25 Secondly, on the fire tank at Wang Fuk Court, the</p>	<p>1 English name, "Victory Fire", instead of Wang Tai in</p> <p>2 Chinese.</p> <p>3 Before the fire, Victory Fire in March of 2025</p> <p>4 completed its annual inspection of the fire services</p> <p>5 equipment at Wang Fuk Court and issued FS251 certificate</p> <p>6 to the FSD, which is the fire services equipment</p> <p>7 installation certificate.</p> <p>8 In relation to the FS251 issued to the FSD in March,</p> <p>9 there were some defects identified in certain parts. So</p> <p>10 this is actually under part 3, and part 3, some defects</p> <p>11 were identified in relation to emergency lighting,</p> <p>12 break-glass and fire alarm system.</p> <p>13 Looking at 6705, at Wang Kin House, we also</p> <p>14 identified similar defect. For Wang Chi House, 6709,</p> <p>15 during the annual inspection in March of 2025 defects</p> <p>16 were found, such as break-glass, emergency lighting and</p> <p>17 fire alarm system.</p> <p>18 According to the information given by the management</p> <p>19 company and Victory Fire, we continued with repair works</p> <p>20 in October and November of 2025.</p> <p>21 On the water tank work, PC&amp;E appointed China Status</p> <p>22 Development and Engineering to handle the fire tanks.</p> <p>23 I'd like to make it clear that China Status is the</p> <p>24 contractor for the water tank installation, and</p> <p>25 Victory Fire works as the contractor for the general</p>

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<p>1 fire service installation.</p> <p>2 I'd also like to talk about the issue of</p> <p>3 construction workers smoking in the construction site.</p> <p>4 Witness statements have already been provided, including</p> <p>5 the record of complaints made by residents as well as</p> <p>6 the follow-up of smoking complaints by PC&amp;E. Notices</p> <p>7 have been plastered. Construction workers have also</p> <p>8 been persuaded not to do so alongside warnings given to</p> <p>9 them. I'm not going to belabour the same point.</p> <p>10 I'd like to turn to 2, regarding the renovation</p> <p>11 works of the buildings, what measures the management</p> <p>12 company put in place.</p> <p>13 Between May and August 2025, PC&amp;E needed to carry</p> <p>14 out works in relation to water works, and at that time</p> <p>15 PC&amp;E sought assistance from the ISS management offices.</p> <p>16 A total of eight documents have been issued but at</p> <p>17 present we have three. Please refer to H2/6779.</p> <p>18 H2/6779, on 8 July 2025, it is a document issued for</p> <p>19 Wang Tao House. Regarding page 6780, on 18 August 2025,</p> <p>20 this is a similar document for another block. Whereas</p> <p>21 for page 6781, Wang Yan House, it is the same work order</p> <p>22 for this block. In responding to the enquiries made by</p> <p>23 the IC, the property management company related that the</p> <p>24 frontline staff members acceded to the request made by</p> <p>25 PC&amp;E.</p>	<p>1 I can once again restate some points, despite the</p> <p>2 fact that they have been mentioned. China Status was</p> <p>3 engaged to be a registered fire services installation</p> <p>4 contractor. It had sent a shutdown notice to the FSD</p> <p>5 regarding the works. Regarding drainage works, when it</p> <p>6 involved the fire service pump room, we need to</p> <p>7 understand whether China Status was involved in its</p> <p>8 arrangements and we also need to understand whether</p> <p>9 instructions or directions had been given by the PC&amp;E to</p> <p>10 the management companies.</p> <p>11 Now, we know the shutdown notices were about the</p> <p>12 fire hose reels but not the fire alarm system, FAS.</p> <p>13 According to Mr Lee and Mr Lo, regarding the drainage</p> <p>14 works of all eight blocks in Wang Fuk Court, when they</p> <p>15 provided assistance to PC&amp;E, this had actually been</p> <p>16 completed by the end of August 2025 and this is in line</p> <p>17 with other documents. Therefore, at the end of</p> <p>18 August 2025, from this moment onwards, until 26 November</p> <p>19 when the fire happened, there was a three-month period</p> <p>20 in between. Had anyone noticed the master switch of the</p> <p>21 pressure pump, had anyone come to notice its situation</p> <p>22 or its status?</p> <p>23 I would like to draw your attention to the documents</p> <p>24 inside the bundle. I'd like to ask members to consider</p> <p>25 them.</p>
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<p>1 Investigations were made in relation to the fire</p> <p>2 services water tank. As soon as we had the</p> <p>3 investigation results, we informed the IC immediately.</p> <p>4 The property management company came into contact with</p> <p>5 two workers. They are Mr Lo Kwok Sui and Mr Lee Shing</p> <p>6 Fu. They were an artisan of Wang Fuk Court and an</p> <p>7 electrician of Wang Fuk Court, respectively. They</p> <p>8 honestly recounted what had happened and the assistance</p> <p>9 provided in the major pump room and the fire service</p> <p>10 pump room.</p> <p>11 Mr Lo said specifically he had switched off the</p> <p>12 master switch for the fire service pump. He was being</p> <p>13 honest. Mr Lo and Mr Lee respectively submitted their</p> <p>14 witness statements to the IC, with the aim of helping</p> <p>15 with the investigation of the IC. Mr Lee and Mr Lo,</p> <p>16 alongside the staff members of PC&amp;E, Mr Lo switched off</p> <p>17 the master switch for the fire service pump.</p> <p>18 During the evidential hearing I understand the IC</p> <p>19 would like to ask about these aspects, and these two</p> <p>20 gentlemen, that is an artisan and an electrician, will</p> <p>21 testify during the evidential hearing. Apart from</p> <p>22 considering the evidence that is going to be provided by</p> <p>23 these two gentlemen alongside other management office</p> <p>24 staff members, I'd like to raise some points for</p> <p>25 consideration by the IC.</p>	<p>1 For cement works and paint works, there were a total</p> <p>2 of two sub-contractors. One, Tai Yeung Gin Cit, Sun</p> <p>3 Construction, and Tin Hung Construction Company.</p> <p>4 According to the paint worker Mr Fung Wai Yip, in</p> <p>5 paragraph 8 in C1-2/1186, Mr Fung mentioned the</p> <p>6 following. He is a paint worker of Tai Yeung Gin Cit.</p> <p>7 Wang Tao House, Wang Tai House, Wang Kin House, he said</p> <p>8 the water tank repair works had already been completed</p> <p>9 in early November 2025.</p> <p>10 Cement worker Mr Lui provided testimony to the</p> <p>11 police. In paragraph 6 he mentioned the following:</p> <p>12 Wang Shing House, in September 2025, the relevant works</p> <p>13 had been completed, whereas for Wang Yan House, the</p> <p>14 works were completed on 21 November 2025.</p> <p>15 We can see that for Wang Cheong House and Wang Chi</p> <p>16 House, the paint works had already been completed but</p> <p>17 there were water seepage issues after tests. We can see</p> <p>18 completed works here. After works, tests needed to be</p> <p>19 conducted. PC&amp;E or China Status, did they need to</p> <p>20 reactivate the fire alarm system or the electricity of</p> <p>21 such a system? Should they have discovered the</p> <p>22 situation of the pressure pump in the fire service pump</p> <p>23 room? I believe the IC will look into this. According</p> <p>24 to the information provided by Victory Fire in October</p> <p>25 and November of 2025, on many occasions, based on the</p>

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<p>1 annual inspection conducted in March, deficiencies were                  2 spotted and maintenance works were conducted.                  3 Victory Fire was responsible for maintaining the fire                  4 safety system and an artisan mentioned that on 16 and                  5 17 October 2025, by preparing for conducting tests for                  6 the fire hose, there wasn't any water from the hose.                  7 CHAIRMAN: Can you give us the reference once again?                  8 MR KHAW: This is C1-2/1290, paragraphs 5 and 6.                  9 Upon learning about this, did Victory Fire or should                  10 they have come to notice that the master switch --                  11 I mean the situation of the master switch in the                  12 pressure pump room? On 19 November 2025, that is                  13 exactly one week before the fire, Victory Fire sent two                  14 workers, Mr Lee and Mr Wong, respectively to be                  15 responsible for replacing and maintaining the                  16 break-glass of the fire alarm system as well as the fuse                  17 of the circuit breaker.                  18 In paragraph 5 of page 1538, the following was                  19 stated. We can see from here in the fourth sentence:                  20 "During the works, as the fire alarm system, there                  21 was a risk of electricity shock. So the master switch                  22 for the fire service pump was connected to the fire                  23 service pump and the fire alarm system."                  24 CHAIRMAN: 1538, is that correct?                  25 MR KHAW: WS-2/1538, paragraph 5.</p>	<p>1 measures had been implemented so that the fire alarm                  2 system could resume normal as soon as possible?                  3 Secondly, when they were aware of the fact that the                  4 master switch had been switched off, did they have the                  5 responsibility to report such to the Fire Services                  6 Department? Did Victory Fire have the responsibility to                  7 report such to the FSD?                  8 I believe the IC will objectively and impartially                  9 consider this issue before reaching a conclusion.                  10 Next I'm going to turn to the third aspect, that is                  11 what happened on the day of the fire. I'd like to touch                  12 upon two points briefly. One, at the time of the fire,                  13 what did the property management company do in response                  14 to the fire? I'd like to draw your attention to Mr Lam,                  15 that is the project officer of ISS, WS-2/1217, between                  16 paragraphs 20 and 22.                  17 As the counsel for the IC already said in the                  18 opening submissions, Mr Lam Man Yan, at the time of the                  19 fire, tried to break the break-glass in Wang Yan House                  20 but the fire alarm didn't go off. Given the urgency of                  21 the situation, he tried to switch on the master switch                  22 of the fire service pump and then the fire alarm system                  23 was heard going off.                  24 In Wang Yan House and Wang Tao House, the same                  25 practice was done, but the fire alarm system didn't go</p>
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<p>1 CHAIRMAN: WS2, right?                  2 MR KHAW: Yes. According to Mr Lee, he contacted Ms Cheng                  3 from the management office, and Ms Cheng is actually one                  4 of the witnesses of the property management company.                  5 Let's take a look at what happened afterwards, two days                  6 later. Let's take a look at WS-2/1538, paragraph 6:                  7 "On 21 November 2025, at around 1.30 pm, I once                  8 again went to the 18th floor of block H of Wang Fuk                  9 Court to replace the fire alarm system and other                  10 equipment on the 24th floor. I found that the master                  11 switch of the fire pump was still switched off                  12 therefore, once again, they had confirmed the situation                  13 of the fire pump system."                  14 WS-2/1531, in paragraph 11, this is the testimony                  15 given by one of the directors. On the day of the fire,                  16 that is 26 November 2025, the works that they were                  17 responsible for had been completed on exactly that day,                  18 but as the fire alarm system was still off on that day,                  19 no checks could be conducted.                  20 Regarding the issues discovered on the same day,                  21 especially for the issues identified in the fire service                  22 pump room, we believe the following issues arose.                  23 Victory Fire is the registered fire installation                  24 contractor. Upon learning the master switch of the fire                  25 pump had been switched off, what was considered and what</p>	<p>1 off. In Wang Sun House, once again the fire alarm went                  2 off.                  3 I want to draw your attention to some points.                  4 Please refer to B2-1/1893 to 1894. 3.3, according to                  5 the FSD, seven blocks out of a total of eight blocks,                  6 the control fuse was blown. As for Wang Chi House,                  7 which wasn't affected by the fire, it was not affected                  8 by the fire, but the control fuse was still found to                  9 have been blown. Regarding Wang Yan House -- scroll                  10 upwards, please -- even after the fuse has been                  11 replaced, the system still could not be activated. On                  12 page 1894, (iii), regarding Wang Shing House, the fuses                  13 of the pump panel in Wang Shing House was found mouldy                  14 and the fire alarm system could not be activated.                  15 Mr Lam tried to turn on the master switch but still the                  16 fire alarm didn't go off. Was this connected? I                  17 believe this is one of the issues that the IC wanted to                  18 take a look at.                  19 Also, this may have to do with the fuse as well as                  20 the fire alarm system. Are there any design flaws or                  21 any flaws in terms of the functions of the fire alarm                  22 system as well as the fuse? Yesterday late at night we                  23 got the latest witness statement from Mr Keung of the                  24 FSD. In paragraph 6.2 and 6.3 it is mentioned that the                  25 problem with the fuse. He said once again that there is</p>

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1 relation between the fuse as well as the fire alarm  
 2 system and the impact of the broken fuse on the alarm  
 3 system. In paragraph 6.2 he mentioned that the fuse as  
 4 well as the circuits were seriously damaged by intense  
 5 heat. So even if there was power supply, because of the  
 6 problem with the fuse, the fire alarm system might not  
 7 be able to function properly. I think this is one  
 8 direction we can take as we conduct the investigation.  
 9 Also, according to the witness statement of a staff  
 10 from the insurance company, the staff at the management  
 11 office used an amplifier to ask residents to evacuate  
 12 when the fire broke out, but the fire persisted so the  
 13 staff at the management office was asked to leave the  
 14 building.  
 15 Chairman and members, my submission has to do with  
 16 the terms of reference of the IC, that is terms of  
 17 reference 1, and according to the information provided  
 18 by the management company concerning the engagement of  
 19 the consultant as well as the contractor, the management  
 20 company's participation was limited. It was mainly  
 21 responsible for the administrative work which involves  
 22 the collation of documents, the attendance of the IO  
 23 meetings as well as following up on the meeting minutes.  
 24 So I'm not going to make further submissions on this,  
 25 but of course if the IC requires, the management company

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1 will provide further information.  
 2 Lastly, I'd like to stress that the management  
 3 company understands that for the victims as well as the  
 4 affected residents, this hearing is very important. So  
 5 in the future hearings, the management company will  
 6 definitely provide further assistance and cooperation in  
 7 relation to the investigative work of the IC.  
 8 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, representative of the ISS.  
 9 Next we will have the counsel for the Competition  
 10 Commission.  
 11 MR LESTER LEE: Thank you. Chairman and members, I on  
 12 behalf of the Competition Commission would like to make  
 13 a very brief submission today. We have Ms Ellie Siu as  
 14 well as Ms Cindy Lau representing the Competition  
 15 Commission today.  
 16 Concerning the terms of reference 2 of the IC, last  
 17 week actually the leading counsel already made a very  
 18 detailed submission on the role of the Competition  
 19 Commission. But on TOR 2, 3 and 4 we'd like to make  
 20 some submission.  
 21 On TOR 2, the Competition Commission indeed noticed  
 22 that the building maintenance market in Hong Kong  
 23 reflects serious and extensive anti-competitive  
 24 practices. This is not only limited to bid-rigging, it  
 25 covers other kinds of anti-competitive practices,

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1 including price-fixing, for example, two or more  
 2 contractors may not have an agreement on which party  
 3 should win the bid, but they usually have agreed on  
 4 a price. So regardless of which party will win the bid,  
 5 both parties will be able to make huge profit.  
 6 Also, we notice that there is market sharing, for  
 7 example, there might be more than one contractor that  
 8 has agreed on the geographical market, for example, one  
 9 contractor will be responsible for Kowloon and another  
 10 responsible for the New Territories. And with market  
 11 sharing, they would not have to collude on the prices  
 12 because they have already made a general agreement, and  
 13 this is again an anti-competitive practice.  
 14 Also, we notice that there is credential sharing,  
 15 that is one building maintenance contractor may lend its  
 16 template letterhead or company credentials and email  
 17 accounts to another building maintenance contractor so  
 18 that the letter may prepare and submit bids in the name  
 19 of the other contractor, to create the impression that  
 20 there is competition. Also we notice that there is  
 21 phantom bidding, that is there might be ostensibly  
 22 independent contractors on the market, but indeed they  
 23 are controlled by the same group. Again, if they want  
 24 to create the false impression that there is  
 25 competition, they may submit bids at the same time.

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1 Regardless of which party will win the bid, again all  
 2 parties involved will make huge profit.  
 3 We see that there are different practices. We see  
 4 that there is practised bid suppression, that is one  
 5 contractor agrees with another contractor that one of  
 6 the parties will submit bids and the other would  
 7 withdraw its bid.  
 8 We also notice that there is cover bidding, that is  
 9 what we call shallow bidding. That is two or more  
 10 contractors will decide in the tender process who will  
 11 one the bid.  
 12 In the process, other stakeholders will also submit  
 13 bids, but they will ensure that they will offer terms  
 14 that are worse than the other contractors. For example,  
 15 the other contractor will submit a bid for a price of  
 16 \$10 million, but the other contractors that help to  
 17 cover the bid will offer a price of \$20 million to  
 18 \$30 million.  
 19 And the bidder that offers the lowest bid will stand  
 20 out or win the bid easily.  
 21 Lastly, bid-rigging. Usually, in bid-rigging, more  
 22 than one consultant would join a bid-rigging syndicate  
 23 and the syndicate is usually headed by a leader and when  
 24 the leader or the mastermind notices there is a bid  
 25 they would like to win, they would make arrangement for

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1 contractors under the syndicate to submit bids at the  
 2 same time, and the leader of the syndicate would issue  
 3 guidance to the contractors under the syndicate on how  
 4 to submit bids. We call it homework, in terms of the  
 5 jargon. So I could elaborate a little bit on how this  
 6 kind of bid-rigging practice has emerged.  
 7 Last week, the leading counsel showed to the members  
 8 that the reports might have been amended so that the  
 9 contractor who wished to win could get the project.  
 10 However, we notice that there is another practice: an  
 11 independent consultant might tell the contractor who  
 12 would like to win what kind of competitors are there so  
 13 that the contractor would convince the competitors to  
 14 withdraw their bids. We think that this is a classical  
 15 case of bid suppression.  
 16 However, there is also a typical practice that  
 17 involves an independent consultant.  
 18 In more large-scale bid-rigging cases we took note  
 19 of the operation of bid-rigging cartels. That is, when  
 20 the cartel or the syndicate wants to win a bid, he would  
 21 assign the contractors under the cartel or the syndicate  
 22 to submit bids, and the ultimate goal is to achieve  
 23 cover bidding so as to make sure that the contractor who  
 24 has already won the bid or intends to win the bid gets  
 25 the project.

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1 Another example is that there might be a large-scale  
 2 building maintenance project and it might involve more  
 3 than one bid-rigging cartel, and this kind of cartel may  
 4 operate separately. Ironically the cartels might be  
 5 competing with each other. However, more commonly we  
 6 see that cartels might work together. Say, one cartel  
 7 is of the view that the contractors under the syndicate  
 8 is not enough and they might borrow contractors from  
 9 other cartels or syndicates. We noticed such situation  
 10 according to our own previous investigations. In light  
 11 of this, we believe that such kind of serious  
 12 anti-competitive practices are extensive and very  
 13 widespread. They occur in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the  
 14 New Territories and they involve a lot of contractors as  
 15 well as engineering consultants and this is a kind of  
 16 systematic practice.  
 17 From the assignment of bids to contractors to other  
 18 practices, we see that the relevant contractors, they  
 19 know very well how to carry out the practice.  
 20 Basically, all witnesses who reported or lodged  
 21 complaints to the Competition Commission all told us  
 22 that this kind of practice has existed on the market for  
 23 a very long time. It is our major duty to combat such  
 24 practices. In 2024, the Competition Commission carried  
 25 out five investigations which involve 68 private housing

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1 estates, 15 industrial buildings and 64 companies.  
 2 Every time the Competition Commission made public our  
 3 operation, that is after we applied from the court for a  
 4 warrant, the Competition Commission would take the  
 5 initiative to reach out to the IOs involved so that they  
 6 could assist the Competition Commission in carrying out  
 7 the investigation and, where possible, we hope that the  
 8 IOs could be given all the relevant information and  
 9 detail so that they would not be left in the dark.  
 10 We hope that we will be able to file the cases to  
 11 the tribunal as early as possible. We have to target.  
 12 First we hope to impose fines to the relevant parties  
 13 that should be held accountable. We want to make sure  
 14 there is deterrence. We don't want criminals to make  
 15 any more profit through their practices or malpractices.  
 16 We want to make sure that by imposing fine, each penny  
 17 they have earned from their malpractice could be handed  
 18 back to the public.  
 19 Second, the Competition Commission would apply to  
 20 have the directorship cancelled. That is, the status of  
 21 directors of the relevant parties. If the court is of  
 22 the view that the Competition Commission could offer any  
 23 support or if the IC thinks that we can offer any  
 24 support, we will provide our analysis.  
 25 Now I'd like to make a very brief submission on

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1 TOR 3 and TOR 4. Like many other serious  
 2 anti-competitive practices, bid-rigging is hard to be  
 3 detected. The reason is simple. The people involved  
 4 are usually very prudent and they take every step to  
 5 cover up their unlawful acts, and that's why the  
 6 Competition Commission always has to rely on other  
 7 government departments for help. As mentioned, we  
 8 conducted joint investigation with the Police Force. We  
 9 also have worked with the ICAC on our joint  
 10 investigations. We are very grateful for their support.  
 11 Making prosecution is a big challenge for the  
 12 Competition Commission as well. The CO is of a civil  
 13 nature and, according to the Ordinance, the Competition  
 14 Commission has to, beyond reasonable doubt, prove that  
 15 the parties that should be held accountable are  
 16 culpable, and we have to only ask the tribunal to make  
 17 inference if there are no other possible options.  
 18 This is different from the practice of other  
 19 jurisdictions. In the UK, the EU as well as in  
 20 Australia, the practice is that they know that this kind  
 21 of bid-rigging behaviour is hard to be detected and hard  
 22 to be prosecuted. That's why they ask the burden of  
 23 proof of the law enforcement agencies to reach the  
 24 standard of civil cases.  
 25 So we have a couple of proposals that concern TOR 4

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<p>1 of the IC, they are legislative proposals, and our                  2 purpose is that we do not want the culprits to be left                  3 at large. We want to sanction them and also we want to                  4 increase the costs as well as the risks for them to                  5 engage in anti-competitive practices. Therefore, we                  6 have proposed a number of legislative proposals.                  7 First, we want to make clear whether the standard                  8 for the burden of proof should be clarified when we want                  9 to impose fine on criminals. Second, we want to draw                  10 reference from the practices of other jurisdictions that                  11 are proven to be effective. Say, for example, one                  12 contractor receives sensitive information from its                  13 competitor in a tender process. Unless the contractor                  14 concerned explains why it has received such information,                  15 we will presume that the contractor that receives                  16 information is violating the Competition Ordinance.                  17 Also, we hope to greatly enhance the level of fines                  18 that could be imposed by us under the law so that we can                  19 ensure deterrence.                  20 Lastly, the Competition Commission noticed that                  21 there is a fierce debate on whether we should                  22 criminalise the practice of bid-rigging. We have to                  23 reiterate that the Competition Commission understands                  24 and supports the idea that we should make use of                  25 legislative means to increase the risk and costs for</p>	<p>1 (The luncheon adjournment)                  2 (2.15 pm)                  3 CHAIRMAN: Counsel for Hop On Management Co Ltd, please.                  4 Opening submissions by MR MAN                  5 MR MAN: Chairman and members, good afternoon.                  6 On behalf of Hop On Management Co Ltd, the                  7 management company of Wang Fuk Court, I'd like to make                  8 the following submissions in relation to the public                  9 hearing.                  10 On 26 November 2025, a fire occurred at Wang Fuk                  11 Court. On 6 January 2026, that is one month or so                  12 later, Hop On was appointed as the independent third                  13 party manager by the Lands Tribunal. In the judgment of                  14 the Lands Tribunal, the fire caused unprecedented damage                  15 to the housing estate. Relief efforts need waste no                  16 time. Such efforts are monumental. The judge is of the                  17 opinion that such management requires experience.                  18 Hop On Management Co Ltd is in a better position to                  19 handle the post-relief efforts.                  20 Hop On was founded in 1974. It is a licensed                  21 property management company. It comprises members                  22 totalling 111. In the judgment of the Lands Tribunal,                  23 it is set out that the introduction of Hop On will                  24 provide important information and professional advice,                  25 allowing the housing estate to make informed decisions.</p>
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<p>1 criminals to engage in anti-competitive practices.                  2 However, we have to be very careful. We are not just                  3 combatting bid-rigging. If we only criminalise                  4 bid-rigging practices, it will not be very effective.                  5 This is because the malpractices we see do not only                  6 cover bid-rigging. It could cover price-fixing,                  7 market-sharing, phantom-bidding, as well as                  8 credential-sharing. All these, whether they should be                  9 incorporated or considered as bid-rigging, deserve                  10 discussion.                  11 As mentioned, the Competition Commission attaches                  12 great importance to this hearing and our CEO mentioned                  13 that we have to fully support the work of the IC. If                  14 the IC requires our further assistance, we would fully                  15 cooperate with the IC.                  16 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, representative from the CC. I'm happy                  17 to see that you have given us a lot of support that has                  18 helped us with our work.                  19 We have heard many submissions today. We know that                  20 Hop On can only attend the hearing in the afternoon.                  21 We will start our witness statements in the afternoon as                  22 well. There are a few residents from Wang Fuk Court who                  23 will give us their statements.                  24 Let us resume at 2.15.                  25 (12.40 pm)</p>	<p>1 In accordance with Cap 344, the Building Management                  2 Ordinance, section 32, Hop On needs to fulfil all the                  3 responsibilities as the secretary and the chairman of                  4 Wang Fuk Court.                  5 As in the judgment of the Lands Tribunal, Hop On is                  6 an independent third party manager. It needs to be                  7 responsible for the legal, security, construction,                  8 engineering, financial matters arising from the fire.                  9 The costs incurred will be subsumed by Nina Wang funds.                  10 Since its appointment, Hop On has been exercising                  11 its professionalism in assisting the court in fulfilling                  12 different responsibilities. Hop On has already provided                  13 the performance bonds totalling \$31,519,000. The funds                  14 have been deposited into the bank account of the IO of                  15 Wang Fuk Court.                  16 [...] operation 2.0, cheques have been distributed                  17 to over 1,000 eligible owners.                  18 Professionals have visited Wang Chi House to conduct                  19 on-site inspections. The relevant information is being                  20 consolidated. Afterwards, the details will be                  21 announced.                  22 As the court-appointed manager, Hop On is                  23 scrutinising the documents of ISS EastPoint, including                  24 a hard disk that is as large as 4TB. There are                  25 objective constraints when it comes the scrutiny of the</p>

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<p>1 facts, but we are mobilising all the professional 2 resources we have in scrutinising all the data we have. 3 On 15 January 2026, as the IO manager of Wang Fuk 4 Court, we have acceded to the request of the counsel of 5 the Independent Committee. We have responded to a total 6 of 45 enquiries in relation to the spread of fire. 7 Hop On has been scrutinising the materials, and over 8 100 documents have been submitted to the Independent 9 Committee. We will also be scrutinising the materials 10 on a regular basis. 11 On behalf of the IO, we support the work of the 12 Independent Committee to uncover the truth. We are also 13 opposed to any untrue accusations. After the 14 publication of the report, Hop On will, having regard to 15 the situation, take appropriate action to safeguard the 16 overall interest of Hop On. 17 Hop On expresses its deep condolences to the 18 victims. As the administrator designated, Hop On will 19 play its role, as well as the statutory duty. Hop On 20 hopes the community as well as the IC will understand 21 the limitations we face in relation to the information 22 we get. We also thank the public for their 23 understanding as well as concern for the fire incident. 24 We will continue to exercise our statutory duty under 25 the Building Management Ordinance with prudence.</p>	<p>1 totally understandable. 2 I'd like to say that for those who are willing to 3 give evidence here, they are offering immense help to 4 our investigative work. 5 We issued questionnaires to the affected residents 6 and we noticed that some of the evidence given by the 7 affected residents are relatively more representative, 8 that's why we invited them here to give evidence. It is 9 no easy task for them to testify in the hearing. It 10 could be a secondary harm for them and they might face 11 pressure when they give evidence. 12 I understand that the reporters here might want to 13 interview the affected residents, but I urge reporters 14 to give the affected residents room and let them decide 15 whether they want to be interviewed. 16 Unless, chairman, you have other instructions, 17 I will call the witnesses. 18 CHAIRMAN: I think I will urge all members as well as the 19 people who are present to pay attention to this. A lot 20 of the witnesses, they are the affected residents and it 21 is not easy for them to be here to give evidence. So 22 I hope for the journalists who want to interview them, 23 you should be more sensitive and you should respect the 24 affected residents. 25 I understand that reporters might want to interview</p>
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<p>1 I so submit. Thank you. 2 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Man. I believe all the relevant 3 parties have made their oral submissions. At this 4 stage, I think we should call for witnesses. 5 MR DAWES: Chairman, we have arranged for the relevant 6 witnesses to give evidence here. 7 As announced, this afternoon we have three residents 8 of Wang Fuk Court who will give evidence here. Before 9 we summon the witnesses, I'd like to add two points. 10 First we noticed that during the first day of the 11 hearing we mentioned that there were nine foreign 12 domestic helpers who passed away in the fire incident. 13 We checked the records and it is true that a total of 14 nine foreign domestic helpers passed away in the 15 incident, but those nine helpers passed away with their 16 employers and there was another foreign domestic helper 17 who passed away alone in the incident. Here, for those 18 foreign domestic helpers who died in the incident, we 19 feel very sad. 20 Second, about the witnesses. This afternoon, as 21 well as in the later days, residents of Wang Fuk Court 22 will be here to give evidence. It's impossible for us 23 to ask all affected residents of Wang Fuk Court to give 24 evidence here. Also, a lot of residents said they do 25 not wish to recall what happened that day and it is</p>	<p>1 the affected residents but please be more sensitive. As 2 I said, it is not an easy task for us to hold the 3 evidential hearing. A lot of people felt very painful 4 by the incident. They have also a lot of emotions about 5 the incident. I hope that we can all be fair and 6 impartial and that we can treat the affected residents 7 fairly. 8 So please be sensitive if you are to interview the 9 affected residents after the hearing. 10 The first witness is Mr Leung Ho Hin. 11 MR DAWES: In front of you there is a declaration. Please 12 read out the declaration. 13 MR LEUNG HO HIN (affirmed) 14 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Leung. You may be seated. 15 Examination MR DAWES 16 MR DAWES: Mr Leung, thank you for being here to give 17 evidence. 18 Mr Leung, according to information, on the day of 19 the fire, you were living in room 303 of Wang Shing 20 House; is that right? 21 Apart from you yourself, who else was living in the 22 apartment? 23 A. Only I and my mother. 24 Q. On the day when the fire broke out, when you first 25 noticed that there was a fire, where were you and how</p>

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<p>1 did you come to realise that there was a fire?</p> <p>2 A. When I realised that there was a fire, I was in my room.</p> <p>3 It was about 3.10 pm. I got WhatsApp messages from my</p> <p>4 relatives and I also noticed from the messages that</p> <p>5 there was a fire in Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>6 Q. What was your first response after you realised that</p> <p>7 there was a fire?</p> <p>8 A. I looked out of the window to see if anything happened.</p> <p>9 Before I confirmed that there was a fire, I already</p> <p>10 heard that there were debris falling from height. So</p> <p>11 before 3 pm, that is around 2.50-something, I already</p> <p>12 heard some noises, but the direction that I was looking</p> <p>13 towards was not where the fire broke out, so I only</p> <p>14 heard some noises and I did not see any workers walking</p> <p>15 around, I did not see any police vehicles. I only heard</p> <p>16 some noises.</p> <p>17 I was resting at home because I felt sick and</p> <p>18 I didn't think much. I only thought that there might be</p> <p>19 some workers who accidentally dropped something and</p> <p>20 I was looking up information online. There was still</p> <p>21 electricity so I could browse the internet. But when</p> <p>22 I tried to switch on the TV to see if there was any</p> <p>23 news, there were no signals anymore. Apart from the</p> <p>24 internet -- well, I mean apart from opening the windows</p> <p>25 and that I heard noises, I could only rely on online</p>	<p>1 A. I was in my room. Then I went to the living room.</p> <p>2 Meanwhile, I heard noises outside the apartment. I saw</p> <p>3 through the peephole of my door that there was a couple</p> <p>4 and they tried moving the fire hose reel and they tried</p> <p>5 to put out the fire themselves, but I didn't see any</p> <p>6 water coming out from the fire hose reel. Normally</p> <p>7 there would be water coming out from the fire hose reel</p> <p>8 and the fire hose reel would be inflated, but, no, the</p> <p>9 fire hose reel stayed deflated and there was no water</p> <p>10 coming out.</p> <p>11 After that, the couple returned the fire hose reel</p> <p>12 to its position. At that time, I thought if I should</p> <p>13 leave and I opened the window and I smelled something.</p> <p>14 It was around 4 at that time. I knew that there was a</p> <p>15 fire, I could smell something, so at that time I decided</p> <p>16 to pack things up and leave. I tried to pay attention</p> <p>17 whether there was any smoke outside, and when I had</p> <p>18 things packed up, through the peephole I saw that it was</p> <p>19 quite dark outside and that there was smoke. Then I</p> <p>20 knew that I couldn't wait any longer, because if I</p> <p>21 waited any longer, I wouldn't be able to escape.</p> <p>22 I didn't even bring my clothes. I only brought the</p> <p>23 most important things, that is things that were in my</p> <p>24 safety kit, and I was ready to leave. But then the</p> <p>25 smoke came to the upper part of my body. I had a towel</p>
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<p>1 information.</p> <p>2 Q. When was it or what time was it when you tried to switch</p> <p>3 on the TV?</p> <p>4 A. It was about 3.30.</p> <p>5 Q. At around 3.30 you didn't see anything happening</p> <p>6 outside; right?</p> <p>7 A. I only heard noises, mainly noises. I didn't smell</p> <p>8 anything that was burning.</p> <p>9 Q. At 3.30, when you heard noises, it was noises of debris</p> <p>10 falling from height; right?</p> <p>11 A. Yes.</p> <p>12 Q. After that, did you hear any fire alarm or fire trucks?</p> <p>13 A. No, no fire alarm at all. When I realised that there</p> <p>14 was a fire, as mentioned, I tried opening the windows</p> <p>15 further. The windows had already been opened for air</p> <p>16 ventilation and I did hear noises of cars and my family</p> <p>17 member asked me if I wanted to go down to check what</p> <p>18 happened, but I chose not to go down, that is because</p> <p>19 I know that across my block there was a refuse</p> <p>20 collection point and I know that there was only a fire</p> <p>21 at Wang Cheong House.</p> <p>22 I didn't think it would help much even if I had gone</p> <p>23 down, so I chose to stay at home to get more information</p> <p>24 before I made a judgment.</p> <p>25 Q. So when did you decide to leave the apartment?</p>	<p>1 with me, I locked the door and then I ran down through</p> <p>2 the fire escape route.</p> <p>3 Q. Could you tell us accurately what time was it</p> <p>4 approximately when you left the apartment?</p> <p>5 A. It should be around 4.10.</p> <p>6 Q. How could you remember so accurately the time?</p> <p>7 A. This is because I checked the conversation on my phone.</p> <p>8 I notified my family when I left. So it should be</p> <p>9 around 4.20.</p> <p>10 Sorry, I have to check the conversation record. It</p> <p>11 was 4.23. I called my family and told them that I was</p> <p>12 safe.</p> <p>13 Q. I want you to try to recall this. When you left the</p> <p>14 apartment, when you got to the lobby and when you left</p> <p>15 the building, what was the situation like?</p> <p>16 A. When I got to the corridor, there was already smoke and</p> <p>17 I chose to leave by going down the stairs. I was very</p> <p>18 lucky. I knew that the stairs could lead me to the</p> <p>19 lobby and there was no smoke at the back stairs, so</p> <p>20 I ran down. When I reached the lobby, I noticed that it</p> <p>21 was already quite dark. There was no light and</p> <p>22 I decided to go out to see what the situation was like.</p> <p>23 I saw that there was some water on the floor and the</p> <p>24 water was dark and I was thinking whether I should go</p> <p>25 back to my apartment or whether I should wait for</p>

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<p>1 firefighters in the lobby.</p> <p>2 To the left of the lobby there is a space for people</p> <p>3 to park their bikes and there was fire and light there,</p> <p>4 so I thought for about 10-odd seconds. At the end</p> <p>5 I decided to run out to the park through the lobby, and</p> <p>6 when I ran out, I saw that there was scaffolding falling</p> <p>7 from height and I, in accordance with the instructions</p> <p>8 given by the police officers, went to a place where it</p> <p>9 was safe.</p> <p>10 Q. I want to ask you, when you got to the lobby and when</p> <p>11 you reached the place that you said was safe, how long</p> <p>12 did it take?</p> <p>13 A. It took about two to three minutes.</p> <p>14 Q. All right. You talked about what happened that day.</p> <p>15 I want you to tell us a little bit about what happened</p> <p>16 prior to the fire.</p> <p>17 Did you think that the maintenance works of Wang Fuk</p> <p>18 Court would cause any hazards? Did anyone complain</p> <p>19 about the maintenance works?</p> <p>20 A. Well, apart from myself, my family members did ask about</p> <p>21 it. It was all sealed and we wanted to have better air</p> <p>22 ventilation, so sometimes we would open the windows, but</p> <p>23 we realised that the windows were covered by styrofoam</p> <p>24 boards. Sometimes when I got home I would smell smoke.</p> <p>25 We didn't lodge any complaints ourselves, but we did</p>	<p>1 A. Right.</p> <p>2 Q. Is there anything that you would like to tell the</p> <p>3 Independent Committee?</p> <p>4 A. I'd like to express briefly something which may not have</p> <p>5 to do with the fire incident. I'd like to express my</p> <p>6 experience.</p> <p>7 After the fire incident -- well, I mean, before the</p> <p>8 fire incident I had always been living in Wang Fuk</p> <p>9 Court. I grew up there. I think some affected</p> <p>10 residents did think about this question: why us? Many</p> <p>11 people complained about this. Well, I didn't lodge any</p> <p>12 complaints myself, but some people noticed that there</p> <p>13 were people smoking.</p> <p>14 When they first talked about carrying out the</p> <p>15 maintenance works, some already asked why it cost</p> <p>16 \$300 million and there were people dealing with the</p> <p>17 legal documents to apply for subsidiaries. We weren't</p> <p>18 able to vote at the IO meeting and I think we were</p> <p>19 forced to do so without any options. At least for me,</p> <p>20 I think that's the case.</p> <p>21 For our block, we thought that around this time, in</p> <p>22 March, that most of the works would be completed and</p> <p>23 that we would finally be able to see light outside with</p> <p>24 the scaffolding removed and that we will be able to</p> <p>25 enjoy life with other residents, but because of this</p>
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<p>1 talk to other residents of Wang Fuk Court that there</p> <p>2 were workers smoking. For residents who smoke, they</p> <p>3 wouldn't open the windows when they smoke. So we talked</p> <p>4 to each other about whether there were workers smoking,</p> <p>5 but as far as I understand, I or my family members did</p> <p>6 not lodge any complaints ourselves about this.</p> <p>7 Q. Let's see if you could help us with this. You mentioned</p> <p>8 that the windows were covered by styrofoam boards. Do</p> <p>9 you remember when it started to happen?</p> <p>10 A. For our block it was one of the two blocks that had the</p> <p>11 scaffolding erected the earliest. After the scaffolding</p> <p>12 was erected, for a period of time we were not staying in</p> <p>13 the apartment because our apartment was being renovated.</p> <p>14 I remember that when we moved back to the apartment, the</p> <p>15 windows were already covered by the styrofoam board.</p> <p>16 But as to the exact date, I can't remember.</p> <p>17 Q. Would you be able to tell us when you returned to your</p> <p>18 apartment after the renovation?</p> <p>19 A. It was January 2025.</p> <p>20 Q. And when did you move out of your apartment?</p> <p>21 A. It should be around November. It took us three months</p> <p>22 to renovate our apartment.</p> <p>23 Q. So, according to you, in November 2024 you moved out of</p> <p>24 the apartment and in 2025 you moved back and back then</p> <p>25 the windows had already been covered?</p>	<p>1 incident -- I don't care what the reason was, but now</p> <p>2 all of our neighbours and friends are scattered</p> <p>3 everywhere. We won't be able to live near to them</p> <p>4 again.</p> <p>5 This is a fact or part of reality that we can't</p> <p>6 change. This incident has occurred and there is nothing</p> <p>7 that we can do to change it. I just hope that you will</p> <p>8 all treasure all those around you and to make sure there</p> <p>9 are no regrets in life.</p> <p>10 MR DAWES: Thank you, Mr Leung.</p> <p>11 Chairman, we do not have any more questions. Thank</p> <p>12 you.</p> <p>13 Questioning by THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS</p> <p>14 CHAIRMAN: Mr Leung, to clarify one point, on the day of the</p> <p>15 fire, was your window closed?</p> <p>16 A. Yes. As I said, I was sick that day so I opened</p> <p>17 a little bit of window to get some fresh air and it was</p> <p>18 because of this reason that I noticed that there were</p> <p>19 noises of debris falling outside. I wasn't able to see</p> <p>20 anything from the window of my unit. I could only hear</p> <p>21 noises.</p> <p>22 MEMBER AUYEUNG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr Leung, for your</p> <p>23 information. Just now you mentioned that from the</p> <p>24 peephole of your door you saw two people trying to put</p> <p>25 out a fire. Were you able to see smoke or smell smoke</p>

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1 at that time?  
 2 A. You mean through the peephole? No, I only saw a man and  
 3 a woman trying to move the fire hose and they pulled the  
 4 hose to the lift on my floor, but I didn't see any fire.  
 5 MEMBER AUYEUNG: Thank you.  
 6 CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions from other parties?  
 7 No. All right. Thank you, Mr Leung, for coming.  
 8 Your statement could really help us with our  
 9 investigation. Thank you.  
 10 (The witness was released)  
 11 MR DAWES: The next witness is Ms Tse Yuk Wa.  
 12 Good afternoon. Ms Tse, could you please rise and  
 13 read out the declaration.  
 14 MS TSE YUK WA (affirmed)  
 15 CHAIRMAN: Ms Tse, thank you for coming.  
 16 Examination by MR DAWES  
 17 MR DAWES: Ms Tse, you live in Wang Cheong House, unit 204.  
 18 It seems that your unit is pretty close to where the  
 19 fire first seemed to have started, so your statement is  
 20 very important to us. You live in that unit. Is there  
 21 anyone living with you?  
 22 A. I live there with my husband.  
 23 Q. How long have you lived in Wang Fuk Court?  
 24 A. More than 10 years.  
 25 Q. Before we go to that day, let's first talk about the

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1 renovation. Do you remember any observations you may  
 2 have had that led you to thinking that there could be  
 3 a fire risk and have you lodged any complaints?  
 4 A. I remember when the scaffolding was erected I took photo  
 5 of workers smoking outside. I'm very sensitive to  
 6 smoke. I always smell smoke from my flat. I didn't  
 7 lodge any complaint, but I know many of the other  
 8 residents did.  
 9 After the scaffolding was erected, our windows were  
 10 covered with foam boards. I remember seeing the workers  
 11 covering the foam boards. They would put up the foam  
 12 boards at the windows and then use a cutter to cut out  
 13 the extra parts from the window frame and then they  
 14 would just throw aside the extra styrofoam on the  
 15 ground.  
 16 I remember I did open the window to see there was  
 17 a lot of the extra styrofoam lying around on the ground,  
 18 a lot of debris outside. And then, as it was so dirty  
 19 outside, I decided not to open the windows anymore.  
 20 Q. From your unit you should be able to see the light well  
 21 outside units 104 and 105.  
 22 A. Yes.  
 23 Q. Before the windows were covered, did you notice  
 24 a situation in that area?  
 25 A. Well, there was a lot of rubbish there before the

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1 windows were enclosed. Before they put up the mosaic  
 2 tiles, they had to sort of cut out the window frames.  
 3 I remember starting from the first day of renovation  
 4 there was already a lot of rubbish around the area.  
 5 Q. Well, you did say that you noticed rubbish around the  
 6 area. Have you ever seen workers in that area?  
 7 A. Well, before the windows were covered, I could see them  
 8 because I would see them working on the scaffolds.  
 9 I did peep out, but then, as I said, the area was  
 10 covered with rubbish.  
 11 Q. Have you ever seen workers smoking?  
 12 A. Yes. When they were erecting the scaffolding.  
 13 Q. Can you tell me whether this is a common occurrence?  
 14 A. Yes, it is.  
 15 Q. I asked about your observation of the light well before  
 16 your windows were covered. Can you tell me around when  
 17 your windows were covered, an estimate date?  
 18 A. It should be around 30 September 2024.  
 19 Q. Why are you so sure of the day?  
 20 A. Because I remember a few days before, they were cutting  
 21 out the window frame areas and at that time I didn't  
 22 think that my whole unit would be covered with dust.  
 23 I didn't know what was happening. I didn't think that  
 24 conducting minor works would be like that and so  
 25 I called the management and then they told me to go

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1 downstairs because it was very dusty in my flat. But as  
 2 I have two cats, I just stayed in my unit.  
 3 Afterwards, my whole place was covered with dust.  
 4 And then they moved on to cutting out the foam boards to  
 5 cut out the window. Well, after that, I would take  
 6 photos of what they are doing each time.  
 7 Q. So your records show that on 30 September 2024 your  
 8 windows were covered by foam boards on that day?  
 9 A. Yes, because the photos I took were the extra foam of  
 10 the foam boards lying outside my window area.  
 11 Q. So how long were your windows covered by these foam  
 12 boards? Until the fire?  
 13 A. I think around one or two weeks before the fire. I'm  
 14 not too sure. But I could say that I remember that half  
 15 of the windows in my unit were not covered by foam  
 16 boards. Originally, my windows were all covered, but it  
 17 seems that they were arranging to have the  
 18 air-conditioning be installed in our bedrooms while they  
 19 work on the windows in the living room. So I remember  
 20 around that time from unit 03 -- so the windows from  
 21 unit 03, which means the windows of my living room and  
 22 the windows of my master bedroom, were not covered by  
 23 foam boards. But the windows of the master bedroom  
 24 facing the side of the fire and the kitchen windows were  
 25 still covered.

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<p>1 Q. So you mean that the windows facing the light well were 2 still covered by foam boards? 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. Now I'd like to ask about the day of the fire. 5 Were you in your unit that day? 6 A. Yes. 7 Q. When did you feel something out of the ordinary? 8 A. I remember I was unwell that day and I stayed in. 9 Around 2 o'clock that day I was in the kitchen. 10 I remember I wanted to do laundry, but every day in my 11 kitchen I would hear loud noises like a landslide on 12 that side. When I do laundry, I would use a dryer and 13 the tube of my dryer faces towards the noise and when 14 there are all these loud noises coming about, I wouldn't 15 turn on my dryer. So that day I was waiting to see 16 whether there are any loud noises from outside. 17 I remember I heard noises that were not the usual 18 noises I hear because usually I would hear workers 19 talking but they were not talking noises. That day 20 I heard noises coming from the area outside my kitchen 21 window. I couldn't hear what they were saying. 22 I thought they were working on something. I just heard 23 someone talking very loudly. 24 Q. So around what time? 25 A. That was before 2.30. And I kept on hearing those</p>	<p>1 outside. I thought it was the dust from my unit 2 spreading out to the hallway. 3 I continued to wait for the management to come up to 4 my unit. I suddenly heard a faint noise. I heard very 5 faint knocking and someone was saying, "Fire, run!" 6 I took a look out into the hallway. I saw a management 7 staff leave and at that time I thought, fire? It 8 shouldn't be fire. The fire alarm didn't go off. 9 I didn't think it would be a fire so I called my 10 husband. I said, "Oh, I heard someone say it's a fire" 11 and he told me to go take a look downstairs. 12 I immediately put my two cats in the cage and then I 13 took my bag and left my unit. I know that usually my 14 nextdoor neighbour, a mother, would be there with her 15 two children. I listened a while and as there were no 16 noises from there, I thought they might still be at 17 school. I carried my cage and when I was carrying my 18 cage I didn't have an empty hand to knock on their door 19 so I didn't do that. 20 I passed by units 1 and 2. I saw that unit 2's 21 neighbour opened a bit of the door and I told them that 22 it seems that there's a fire, let's go take a look 23 downstairs. I didn't think that it would be something 24 big. I just thought that I would go down and take 25 a look.</p>
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<p>1 landslide noises, so I decided to that it wasn't the day 2 to do laundry. So I made myself a cup of coffee and 3 moved into the living room and suddenly I heard a very 4 loud noise from the kitchen. When I heard that, I 5 rushed to the kitchen. I found that there was a lot of 6 smoke coming into the kitchen. 7 At that time I wasn't aware that it was a fire 8 because -- because before, dust came that rushed in like 9 once so I didn't think it was anything out of the 10 ordinary, and then I called the management office and 11 asked what kind of works they are doing outside, my 12 whole kitchen is covered with smoke. The management 13 replied saying that they didn't know and they would send 14 someone to take a look and told me to wait. 15 So while I was waiting, I suddenly felt that 16 I should record it so I could let PC&amp;E know that this is 17 happening to my unit. When I was recording -- when 18 I saw that -- well, actually I didn't smell anything, so 19 I wasn't aware of anything happening. So I just 20 recorded it. But then the smoke was going up because, 21 from what I know, if it's dust, then dust would actually 22 descend instead of ascend. 23 I started coughing and thought I should open my door 24 so there would be more ventilation. I opened my door 25 and peeped out to take a look and it looked a bit dusty</p>	<p>1 I passed by the lift and walked past unit 7 and 2 unit 8. I know that an old lady in unit 8 and her 3 helper would be inside because the door was slightly 4 open, but I was carrying the cage, I didn't knock on 5 their door, I didn't have a hand to knock on the door 6 and I just thought that it wasn't anything major, so 7 I would just go down and take a look. If there's 8 anything, I would just come up and call them. 9 I took the stairs to 1st floor. I saw an old lady 10 there. She was hesitating whether to leave or not. 11 There was some smoke then. I told the old lady on the 12 1st floor that it seems that there's a fire and she 13 said, "Yes, I heard that too". I said, "Let's go down 14 together and see what's wrong". So I pulled her to go 15 down with me. 16 When I reached the lobby of Wang Cheong House, only 17 then did I realise how big the fire was. You could just 18 see the fire. The walls were really hot and I couldn't 19 walk. In the middle of the staircase, I pulled along 20 the old lady to walk down together by just staying to 21 one side of the wall. When I reached downstairs, there 22 was nobody else but the two of us, so I took the old 23 lady along with me and we just ran out from the lift 24 lobby. There was no one else but us two and the fire 25 was really strong outside. I immediately thought of</p>

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<p>1 putting down my cats and to go back up to warn my 2 neighbours but when I left the lift lobby of Wang Cheong 3 House, the scaffolding nets on the facade were already 4 all burning and falling down. 5 I told the old lady that we must leave immediately 6 because I was afraid that the bamboo would fall down. 7 So I took her to the park nearby. I was very worried at 8 that time because I wanted to put down my cats and go 9 back up to warn my neighbours because there was nobody 10 else in the area at that time. 11 However, when I looked back, the entire Wang Cheong 12 House had smoke emitting from the block. The whole 13 building was like a furnace. As I rushed out of the 14 lift lobby, I saw a lot of smoke. There was no way for 15 me to return to the block. I was astonished. There was 16 nothing else I could do. I knew some neighbours were 17 still up there. Then I saw firefighters arriving at the 18 scene. 19 Initially, I could only see the fire on the rooftop 20 of the building. The source of the fire should be 21 behind us near the Tolo Harbour so basically the whole 22 building was emitting black smoke. It was like 23 a furnace up there in our building. Firefighters ran 24 and pulled the fire hoses. I knew that I had to move 25 away. I had to be afar in order to not obstruct</p>	<p>1 A. Closed. Because of dust, I even attached adhesive tape 2 on the windows. 3 Q. Did you pay attention to the conditions of your window? 4 A. No. I heard a loud bang and there was a lot of smoke. 5 At that time, I didn't know they were fumes. I only 6 thought that was smoke. That's why I closed the door 7 and I walked away from that. On last occasion I inhaled 8 dust and I had a bad cough. 9 Q. Can you tell us when you left your unit, what time, 10 around? 11 A. At 2.51 I called the management office. At 2.59 -- 12 well, 2.53 I took a video inside my unit and I called my 13 husband. At 2.59 I told him about the fire and then I 14 left. When I arrived at the park, I took a picture of 15 the fire of Wang Shing Court. At that time it was 2 16 minutes past 3 o'clock, so I guess around 3 o'clock I 17 arrived at the park. 18 Q. In other words, I'd just like to seek clarification from 19 you, you saw it was the scaffolding net of Wang Shing 20 Court that caught fire. What was the time? Was it 21 2 minutes past 3? 22 A. Let me take a look at my statement again. Just 23 a minute. 24 Yes. 2 minutes past 3 o'clock. 25 Q. Did that fire that you referred to exacerbate and spread</p>
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<p>1 firefighters. 2 There wasn't any fire alarm so a lot of people 3 didn't know about this. There were people evacuating 4 from the building. I was aware that the situation was 5 serious. 6 In the park a mother came to me and she was actually 7 the mother living next to me. She told me her husband 8 was sleeping inside the unit. I blame myself because 9 I thought I couldn't go back to knock on the door. 10 I knew that they were inside but I hadn't realised that 11 the situation would have been so serious. 12 I was staying in the park, looking at the fire, but 13 at that time I could see the scaffolding was on fire and 14 falling down. Suddenly, a gust of wind blew and the 15 fire spread to Wang Shing Court. Then I saw fire on the 16 scaffolding net and all of a sudden I remembered that 17 the parents-in-law of my friend were living inside the 18 building and I called my friend, asking him/her to ask 19 parents-in-law to leave as there was a fire. 20 In the end, I knew that the parents-in-law could 21 leave but I could only stand there looking at the fire. 22 Q. Ms Tse, I'd like you to tell us -- just now you talked 23 about the window in your kitchen, you heard a bang which 24 was a loud bang. Was the window of your kitchen open or 25 closed?</p>	<p>1 to Wang Shing? 2 A. Yes. At that time I didn't take any more videos. There 3 was wind blowing the fire and the fire ball was attached 4 to the scaffolding net, which set other stuff on fire. 5 Q. Just now you said while you were escaping you went out 6 of your unit and you saw smoke. As you went downstairs, 7 was there any smoke? 8 A. Yes. 9 Q. Apart from what I asked you, is there anything you want 10 to tell the Independent Committee? 11 A. I hope this time when I come out to give evidence I can 12 help my neighbours. In addition to me myself who could 13 leave, a lot of neighbours were helped by firefighters 14 or some have already passed away. I hope to uncover the 15 truth of the fire in Wang Fuk Court. 16 MR DAWES: Thank you, chairman. We have no further 17 questions. 18 CHAIRMAN: Mr Chan. 19 Questioning by THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS 20 MEMBER CHAN: Thank you, Ms Tse. Thank you for giving 21 evidence. Don't take the blame on yourself. You have 22 already done your best. 23 The Independent Committee went to units 104 and 105 24 of Wang Cheong House. The units were burned beyond 25 recognition. The owners of the two units were facing</p>

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1 the light well. There was a lot of noise so they moved  
 2 out. A lot of garbage accumulated over there, hence the  
 3 danger. Accumulation of garbage, risks of fire service  
 4 installation, did you file any complaint with the  
 5 management office?  
 6 A. No.  
 7 MEMBER CHAN: Reason? Why was that?  
 8 A. Well, many residents have been making complaints, that's  
 9 why I didn't go out of my way to make a complaint.  
 10 MEMBER CHAN: We think that might be the source of the fire.  
 11 We are aware that there's a staircase leading up to the  
 12 light well for construction workers to take a break or  
 13 to smoke; of course that shouldn't be the case as there  
 14 should be a gate over there. Did it come to your  
 15 attention that at a particular time you smelled smoke?  
 16 A. Well, the windows were sealed or covered. That's why  
 17 I couldn't smell any smoke at that time. Apart from the  
 18 spot you mentioned, there's a bicycle parking area  
 19 downstairs of Wang Cheong House. And in that area  
 20 construction workers smoke over there.  
 21 MEMBER CHAN: So do you mean it's common to see construction  
 22 workers smoking?  
 23 A. Yes.  
 24 MEMBER CHAN: I have no further questions. Thank you.  
 25 CHAIRMAN: Would any involved parties like to ask questions?

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1 No.  
 2 Thank you, Ms Tse. Your testimony is very useful in  
 3 helping us know more about the case. As what Mr Chan  
 4 said, don't take the blame upon yourself. Many things  
 5 happen in a flash. You are very courageous today in  
 6 coming to this hearing to give evidence. Thank you very  
 7 much. Your testimony is very important to us. Thank  
 8 you for coming.  
 9 WITNESS: Thank you.  
 10 MR DAWES: Thank you. You can leave now, Ms Tse.  
 11 (The witness was released)  
 12 MR DAWES: The third witness is Ms Ko Yee Lui.  
 13 Ms Ko, good afternoon. Like the two witnesses just  
 14 now, before, please stand up and read your affirmation.  
 15 MS KO YEE LUI (affirmed)  
 16 Examination by MR DAWES  
 17 MR DAWES: Thank you. We know you live in unit 2405 of Wang  
 18 Cheong House.  
 19 A. Yes.  
 20 Q. Apart from you, any other family members living with  
 21 you?  
 22 A. In the past two years or so, I lived in the unit alone.  
 23 Q. Apart from you yourself living in the unit, do you have  
 24 any other relatives living in Wang Fuk Court?  
 25 A. My parents live in another block.

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1 Q. Which block?  
 2 A. Wang Chi House.  
 3 Q. All right. We know that at the time of the fire you  
 4 were inside your unit. Can you tell us what you were  
 5 doing? When did you sense something wrong was  
 6 happening?  
 7 A. At 2 o'clock or so I returned home. I turned on the TV.  
 8 I planned to leave home again at 3 o'clock. At that  
 9 time I switched on television and was working with my  
 10 computer. I was working on my stuff on my computer.  
 11 Just as I was sitting there, at around 53 minutes, I had  
 12 a cup of drink in front of me and I was sitting there.  
 13 Q. Do you mean 2.53?  
 14 A. Yes. All of a sudden my television didn't have a signal  
 15 but the monitor was on. I didn't think much, as  
 16 sometimes the reception was poor, there wasn't any  
 17 signal. So I kept working on my own stuff and I started  
 18 to smell something burnt. At that time, I remember on  
 19 that day, in the lift lobby notices were put up setting  
 20 out on which floors construction works were being  
 21 conducted, and I remember on around the 21st or  
 22 22nd floors construction works or renovation works were  
 23 being conducted.  
 24 All of my windows were covered, but following the  
 25 typhoon, as mosaic tiles had not been paved, it was all

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1 wet. There was a hole in my unit because of boring, so  
 2 I went to Victory Fire to ask.  
 3 On that day I smelled smoke. That's why I opened my  
 4 window and looked out of my window and took a look.  
 5 I smelled something burnt but I couldn't see any smoke  
 6 or fire. Probably there was smell of welding. That  
 7 wasn't surprising to me. That's why I closed my window  
 8 and I sat there right in front of my television.  
 9 Q. Why do you remember very clearly that when your  
 10 television didn't have a signal it was 2.53?  
 11 A. Because I planned to leave home at around 3 o'clock.  
 12 I planned to go out at 3 o'clock. When I left home and  
 13 took the first picture, it was around that time.  
 14 Q. So you deduce that this was the time back then; is that  
 15 correct?  
 16 A. Yes.  
 17 Q. Just now you described what you saw when you looked out  
 18 of the window. Then what happened?  
 19 A. After I closed the window, the smell of something being  
 20 burned was becoming more and more pronounced. I washed  
 21 and cleaned my mug and then I immediately left home.  
 22 I went out twice of the kitchen. Nothing was happening.  
 23 Previously, there was dust flowing inside my unit.  
 24 I was afraid that my home would be filled with dust,  
 25 that's why I put a cloth to protect my unit from dust.

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<p>1 And I can see the range hood and my tablecloth, there</p> <p>2 was a lot of smoke.</p> <p>3 Q. Around what time?</p> <p>4 A. 55.</p> <p>5 Q. Then what did you do?</p> <p>6 A. I didn't imagine there would be a fire and I was</p> <p>7 thinking to myself did something cook and burn</p> <p>8 something? In the past, firefighters knocked on the</p> <p>9 door because of this. At that time I thought something</p> <p>10 similar was happening. So I was thinking I should</p> <p>11 immediately go to the security guards and tell them</p> <p>12 probably someone was cooking and there was a burning</p> <p>13 smell. I opened the door and you could see the whole</p> <p>14 corridor being filled with smoke.</p> <p>15 Q. Would you be able to deduce the time when you saw that</p> <p>16 the whole corridor was filled with smoke?</p> <p>17 A. Well, in the kitchen, around 55, at around the same time</p> <p>18 I opened the door.</p> <p>19 Q. You saw the smoke filling up the corridor. What did you</p> <p>20 do then?</p> <p>21 A. I saw smoke. The smoke was thick. As I opened my door,</p> <p>22 on the right there was the fire door. There's a glass</p> <p>23 pane on the fire door and you could see what was</p> <p>24 happening on the other side. I saw smoke and then</p> <p>25 I looked out of my door and I took a look of the means</p>	<p>1 phrase "very serious". Then I ran out immediately.</p> <p>2 Q. When you ran out, what did you see?</p> <p>3 A. After I had run out I saw people standing on the ground,</p> <p>4 but once I walked out, I turned around. When I turned</p> <p>5 around and took a look, there wasn't any fire still.</p> <p>6 But for the direction that my kitchen was facing, as you</p> <p>7 can see from the picture that I took, you could see</p> <p>8 smoke behind the door. The smoke was flowing skywards.</p> <p>9 I took a picture, I made a call very quickly, and then</p> <p>10 I saw fire, I saw a blaze up there. I stood there,</p> <p>11 I was rooted to the ground.</p> <p>12 Q. What time was it?</p> <p>13 A. When I took the first picture it was 2.57.</p> <p>14 Q. You said your parents were staying at Wang Chi House.</p> <p>15 Did you call them?</p> <p>16 A. Yes, as soon as I got down, I called them. I said,</p> <p>17 "There is a fire. I came down. You should come down</p> <p>18 also."</p> <p>19 Q. When you were escaping, did you hear any fire alarm or</p> <p>20 fire trucks?</p> <p>21 A. No.</p> <p>22 Q. I'd like to show you a picture. This is page 429 of</p> <p>23 bundle 1, bundle IE1/429.</p> <p>24 Was this picture taken by you?</p> <p>25 A. Yes.</p>
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<p>1 of escape. It was filled with white smoke. I couldn't</p> <p>2 see anything apart from white smoke.</p> <p>3 So at that time, I couldn't think that much.</p> <p>4 I didn't bring with me anything for survival. I just</p> <p>5 took a bag, put on my shoes and then left my unit.</p> <p>6 Q. Then how did you leave?</p> <p>7 A. I had no choice. I couldn't return to my home.</p> <p>8 Q. So how did you escape?</p> <p>9 A. I took the lift.</p> <p>10 Q. Did you take the lift to the lift lobby directly, to the</p> <p>11 ground? Any stop?</p> <p>12 A. No. Directly to the lift lobby.</p> <p>13 Q. So what was the situation when you arrived at the lift</p> <p>14 lobby?</p> <p>15 A. When I arrived at the lift lobby, immediately I saw a</p> <p>16 delivery man pushing a cart. And then I told him,</p> <p>17 "Don't go inside, there was smoke on the 20th floor".</p> <p>18 I asked the delivery man not to take the lift. I saw</p> <p>19 the female security guard and I knew she had no idea</p> <p>20 what was happening.</p> <p>21 Then I saw someone, a lady from the management</p> <p>22 office, running inside. She said "very serious",</p> <p>23 "close" something, and I didn't catch that word, she</p> <p>24 said, "close" something, it was "very serious", "close"</p> <p>25 something, and I didn't catch that word. I heard the</p>	<p>1 Q. Were you referring to this picture?</p> <p>2 A. Right.</p> <p>3 Q. And this is a picture you took when you turned around?</p> <p>4 A. Yes.</p> <p>5 Q. When the maintenance works were carried out, did you</p> <p>6 have any safety concerns involving, for example, the</p> <p>7 fire services system, or did you make any complaints?</p> <p>8 A. No, I didn't make any complaints, but they had drilled</p> <p>9 holes and there were water leaking through the mosaic</p> <p>10 tiles, so I did follow up with them on this. And after</p> <p>11 the typhoon, the entire wall of my apartment got wet.</p> <p>12 But no one followed up, even until November.</p> <p>13 Just before the fire, I mean at the few days before</p> <p>14 the fire, I actually asked why no one followed up on the</p> <p>15 problems and I told them, "But you had already put up</p> <p>16 the mosaic tiles."</p> <p>17 Q. You remember in September there was a typhoon; right?</p> <p>18 Did you notice anything after the typhoon?</p> <p>19 A. There were holes in the scaffolding net after the</p> <p>20 typhoon.</p> <p>21 Q. So a lot of scaffolding net was gone. What else did you</p> <p>22 notice? Was the scaffolding net replaced after the</p> <p>23 typhoon?</p> <p>24 A. Yes. A batch of scaffolding net that a lighter green</p> <p>25 was there. So if you look from afar the scaffolding net</p>

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<p>1 was of different colours and the latest batch was of                  2 a lighter colour.                  3 Q. Now, about the smoking issue. Did you yourself see any                  4 workers smoke?                  5 A. Yes.                  6 Q. Was it common, according to your memory?                  7 A. Yes.                  8 Q. And where were they smoking?                  9 A. Mainly on the ground floor. They usually like to rest                  10 on the side of the building and they were smoking there.                  11 I did smell smoke when I was at home, but I didn't open                  12 the windows to check.                  13 Q. Did you make any complaints about construction workers                  14 smoking?                  15 A. No.                  16 Q. Do you know if your neighbors had lodged any complaints?                  17 A. I don't know. Basically, I think even with a lot of                  18 complaints, no one could control the problem because the                  19 workers would continue to smoke.                  20 Q. Is there anything else that you would like to tell the                  21 Committee, making use of this opportunity?                  22 A. I want to say I heard that the fire services system was                  23 switched off. I can't imagine how helpless the people                  24 there were because I think I was only lucky that                  25 I managed to escape because I could take the lift</p>	<p>1 Court.                  2 MEMBER CHAN: So when the fire first broke out until you                  3 left, did you think that the fire spread very quickly                  4 and that the fire spread quickly to the other blocks?                  5 What do you think was the reason? Was it because there                  6 was a big wind? Is it because it was dry?                  7 A. I took you some pictures myself and the pictures show                  8 that there were styrofoam boards placed on the                  9 scaffolding.                  10 MEMBER CHAN: So you saw that the styrofoam boards were on                  11 fire?                  12 A. I could not see that because I had already gone down.                  13 But I saw smoke and that there was an explosion upstairs                  14 and also downstairs, I mean on the lower floors, there                  15 was also a fire. And before the fire, I saw dirty water                  16 as well as miscellaneous goods, and no one dealt with                  17 the water and the goods and that could be a reason for                  18 the rapid spread of the fire.                  19 MEMBER CHAN: It's rare that we see such a rapid spread of                  20 fire.                  21 What is your memory of the job done by the                  22 firefighters? Why do you think the fire went out of                  23 control?                  24 A. When I first went down, I saw a fire truck and there was                  25 an explosion and there were sparks coming off and the</p>
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<p>1 downstairs. But I also regret that I didn't knock on                  2 anybody's door. I can't imagine people being there                  3 without a functioning fire services system.                  4 Could it have been done better? I can no longer see                  5 a lot of the neighbors who were living in my block and                  6 I myself did not do a good enough job, so can you do                  7 a better job in terms of finding out the truth?                  8 Q. Thank you, Ms Ko. Anything else that you would like to                  9 add?                  10 A. I really hope that we can all treasure this. It's not                  11 so easy to cherish this because the incident happened in                  12 a moment.                  13 MR DAWES: Thank you. I do not have any further questions.                  14 Questioning by THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS                  15 MEMBER CHAN: Ms Ko, again I hope that you could feel more                  16 relieved because it's not your responsibility. Of                  17 course you could have saved more lives, but it was no                  18 easy task that you managed to escape. I have one                  19 question for you.                  20 You were able to witness the entire incident.                  21 I want to know what time you managed to leave Wang Fuk                  22 Court.                  23 A. You mean what time I left?                  24 MEMBER CHAN: Was it around 7 or 8 pm that night?                  25 A. I think it was about 6 or 7 pm when I left Wang Fuk</p>	<p>1 fire trucks came very quickly and they blocked the                  2 entire road, and at Wang Chi House I saw firefighters                  3 making use of the fire hose reels, so I think they tried                  4 their best already.                  5 MEMBER CHAN: And there were debris falling from height and                  6 some firefighters couldn't even get into Wang Cheong                  7 House did you see the same situation?                  8 A. What I saw was that at the beginning there were five to                  9 six fire trucks that filled the road, I mean the centre                  10 part of the road. And so --                  11 MEMBER CHAN: You mean even with more fire trucks it                  12 wouldn't help?                  13 A. Right.                  14 MEMBER CHAN: We citizens do not know how to put out fire,                  15 but what do you think could have been improved? Do you                  16 think it would be better if there was a fire alarm?                  17 A. Of course. I did not hear any fire alarm at all. Even                  18 when I was staying in the area, I did not hear any fire                  19 alarm.                  20 MEMBER CHAN: All right. I do not have any further                  21 questions.                  22 MEMBER AUYEUNG: Thank you, chairman.                  23 Ms Ko, I have the same question for you. Just now                  24 the counsel asked you a question and you said you did                  25 not hear any fire trucks. When you first smelled the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 105</p> <p>1 smoke until you left your home, did you hear any                  2 amplifiers telling people to leave their homes?                  3 A. No, not when I was leaving the building.                  4 MEMBER AUYEUNG: All right. Thank you.                  5 CHAIRMAN: Ms Ko, again you shouldn't blame yourself. You                  6 courageously came here to give evidence and the evidence                  7 you gave is very helpful for us. I can tell you that                  8 our Committee will in an open, fair and impartial manner                  9 find out the truth. We will try our best. Thank you.                  10 MR DAWES: Chairman, perhaps we should ask if any involved                  11 parties have questions for the witness.                  12 CHAIRMAN: Does any responsible involved party have any                  13 questions for the witness? All right.                  14 Ms Ko, you may leave now. Thank you.                  15 (The witness was released)                  16 CHAIRMAN: I think from the evidence given by the witnesses                  17 today, one of the most unfortunate things is that the                  18 residents are blaming themselves. I want to reiterate                  19 that the fire took place in just a few seconds so                  20 there's no need for you to blame yourselves. I want to                  21 repeat myself and afterwards we will end the hearing                  22 today.                  23 Before I end the hearing I'd like to say that a few                  24 witnesses came to give evidence in a very courageous                  25 manner. They are under different levels of</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">I N D E X P A G E</p> <p>1                  2                  3 Opening submissions by MR SUEN .....1                  4                  5 Opening submissions by MR LUI .....36                  6                  7 Opening submissions by MR KHAW .....45                  8                  9 Opening submissions by MR MAN .....67                  10                  11 MR LEUNG HO HIN (affirmed) .....72                  12                  13 Examination MR DAWES .....72                  14                  15 Questioning by THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS .....80                  16                  17 (The witness was released) .....81                  18                  19 MS TSE YUK WA (affirmed) .....81                  20                  21 Examination by MR DAWES .....81                  22                  23 Questioning by THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS .....92                  24                  25 (The witness was released) .....94                  MS KO YEE LUI (affirmed) .....94                  Examination by MR DAWES .....94                  Questioning by THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS .....102                  (The witness was released) .....105</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 106</p> <p>1 psychological pressure; I hope our media friends will                  2 respect them.                  3 I guess we'll end the hearing today and our hearing                  4 will continue next Thursday.                  5 There will be other witnesses giving evidence next                  6 week, right? All right. We will adjourn the hearing.                  7 (3.33 pm)                  8 (The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am                  9 on Thursday, 26 March 2026)                  10                  11                  12                  13                  14                  15                  16                  17                  18                  19                  20                  21                  22                  23                  24                  25</p>	<p>1                  2                  3                  4                  5                  6                  7                  8                  9                  10                  11                  12                  13                  14                  15                  16                  17                  18                  19                  20                  21                  22                  23                  24                  25</p>