

Independent Committee in relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po

Before:

**The Honourable Mr Justice David Lok
The Honourable Mr Chan Kin-por, GBS, JP
Dr Rex Auyeung Pak-kuen, GBS, JP**

On:

**Day 04
Thursday, 26 March 2026**

Mr Victor Dawes SC, Mr SW Lee, Mr Jason Yu, Mr Jonathan Fung, Mr John Cheung and Mr Brian Lee appeared on behalf of the Independent Committee

Mr Richard Khaw, Mr Martin Ho and Mr Cedric Yeung appeared on behalf of ISS EastPoint Properties Ltd

Mr Jenkin Suen SC, Mr Calvin Cheuk and Mr Charlie Liu appeared on behalf of the Government

Mr Mike Lui SC and Mr Ross Yuen appeared on behalf of the Urban Renewal Authority

Representatives of Department of Justice

Representatives of Competition Commission

Solicitor for Hop On Management Company Limited

Mr Jeffrey Tam and Mr Andrew Lau appeared on behalf of the residents of Wang Fuk Court

Solicitors for Mr WONG Hap Yin

Page 1	Page 3
<p>1 Thursday, 26 March 2026</p> <p>2 (10.11 am)</p> <p>3 CHAIRMAN: We've started a little bit late today.</p> <p>4 I understand that the legal team has to spend time to</p> <p>5 make arrangements for the witnesses. We understand</p> <p>6 that.</p> <p>7 Now we will start with Mr Dawes.</p> <p>8 MR DAWES: Chairman and members, we will continue to call</p> <p>9 witnesses. They are residents of Wang Fuk Court. The</p> <p>10 first one is Ms Ng Oi See, Elsie.</p> <p>11 Good morning, Ms Ng. There is a declaration in</p> <p>12 front of you. Please stand up and read it.</p> <p>13 MS NG OI SEE, ELSIE (affirmed)</p> <p>14 Examination by MR DAWES</p> <p>15 Q. Please be seated. Ms Ng, information shows that you</p> <p>16 live in room 305 of Wang Cheong House. When did you</p> <p>17 move in?</p> <p>18 A. November 1993.</p> <p>19 Q. On the material day, other than you, anyone else live</p> <p>20 with you in the flat?</p> <p>21 A. No.</p> <p>22 Q. I understand that on the day of the fire you left</p> <p>23 Wang Fuk Court earlier that day. Can you tell us where</p> <p>24 you went and when did you return home to find that there</p> <p>25 was a fire?</p>	<p>1 A. I heard noises. From that I deduced that they were</p> <p>2 debris of concrete and the sound of landing of</p> <p>3 construction materials.</p> <p>4 Q. Can you tell us when it started?</p> <p>5 A. For a very long time. Since the start of the</p> <p>6 maintenance work.</p> <p>7 Q. Other than rubbish, did you see workers being there?</p> <p>8 A. No, I did not, but I heard voices, many voices.</p> <p>9 Q. How often did you hear voices?</p> <p>10 A. On a daily basis.</p> <p>11 Q. It came from that point?</p> <p>12 A. That's right.</p> <p>13 Q. During the maintenance project, did you see or did you</p> <p>14 learn it through any way that workers smoked?</p> <p>15 A. I did not see it, but I smelt it.</p> <p>16 Q. Where did you smell it?</p> <p>17 A. From the windows of my kitchen, living room, bedroom and</p> <p>18 bathroom, as well as my main door. I could smell smoke.</p> <p>19 Q. Did it happen before the maintenance project?</p> <p>20 A. Yes, but rarely, and at night, not during daytime,</p> <p>21 during work hours.</p> <p>22 Q. During the maintenance project, did you see any</p> <p>23 cigarette butts or any miscellaneous items on the ground</p> <p>24 floor?</p> <p>25 A. There were cigarette butts as well as construction</p>
Page 2	Page 4
<p>1 A. At about 7 am I left home. At about 2 o'clock or so</p> <p>2 I took minibus 806 from City One to go back home.</p> <p>3 Q. When did you find there was a fire at Wang Fuk Court?</p> <p>4 A. On the minibus. The driver said that there was a fire</p> <p>5 at Wang Fuk Court. When I arrived at the flyover of the</p> <p>6 sewage treatment centre, I saw that the sky where my</p> <p>7 flat was filled with smoke.</p> <p>8 Q. When was that?</p> <p>9 A. That was about close to 3 o'clock.</p> <p>10 Q. Before the fire, in relation to the maintenance of the</p> <p>11 complex, I'd like to ask you about your observations.</p> <p>12 From your flat you could see that there was a roof at</p> <p>13 the light well of Wang Cheong House?</p> <p>14 A. Right.</p> <p>15 Q. What was your observation of the flat roof?</p> <p>16 A. I couldn't see the first floor because on each floor</p> <p>17 there was a scaffolding and some planks erected as</p> <p>18 corridors in the scaffolding outside the building as</p> <p>19 pathways.</p> <p>20 Q. As you understand, was there a lot of rubbish on the</p> <p>21 flat roof?</p> <p>22 A. I believe that is the case because every day I heard</p> <p>23 things falling on to the flat roof.</p> <p>24 Q. You mentioned you heard it, but you did not see</p> <p>25 anything?</p>	<p>1 waste.</p> <p>2 Q. You mention construction waste. Where did you see it?</p> <p>3 What location?</p> <p>4 A. When I stuck my head out of the window, I could see it.</p> <p>5 Q. So where was it?</p> <p>6 A. From my kitchen, from the window at the hall near my</p> <p>7 main window, as well as my living room window. When</p> <p>8 I stuck my head out I could see the rubbish.</p> <p>9 Q. Where were the items?</p> <p>10 A. Hanging on scaffoldings or near bay windows.</p> <p>11 Q. What was it?</p> <p>12 A. Black plastic -- the black strips used for scaffoldings,</p> <p>13 leftovers of foam boards from some tailoring of the foam</p> <p>14 board.</p> <p>15 Q. Other than the -- other than on the scaffolding as well</p> <p>16 as outside your window, did you see any other</p> <p>17 construction sites, any other locations?</p> <p>18 A. Yes, from time to time.</p> <p>19 Q. Where?</p> <p>20 A. The floor area outside the building, in between the</p> <p>21 building and the scaffolding.</p> <p>22 Q. How often did you see the construction waste?</p> <p>23 A. Occasionally.</p> <p>24 Q. Before the fire, the fire was on 26 November, over those</p> <p>25 few days before the fire, did you see any?</p>

Page 5	Page 7
<p>1 A. Yes, it was quite often. Every morning at about 2 8 o'clock or so I heard a lot of noise from falling 3 objects. 4 Q. Another topic I'd like to cover is the staircase, the 5 smoke stop door or doors, any doors leading to the lift 6 lobby on the ground floor, were they open? 7 A. Right. 8 Q. Has there been any occasions when they were locked and 9 could not be opened? 10 A. No, not locked, not that fire smoke door. 11 Q. What about somewhere off the ground floor lobby, 12 anywhere that's locked? 13 A. Over my side on the ground floor there was one door, 14 I don't know whether it was locked, but I could not open 15 it to go outside. 16 Q. When did you try to open it? 17 A. It was a long time ago. 18 Q. Did you try it once or more than once? 19 A. Couple of times. 20 Q. Anything else you'd like to tell the Committee about 21 this incident? 22 A. (Witness shakes head). 23 MR DAWES: I've got no further questions. 24 CHAIRMAN: Ms Ng, thank you very much for testifying. 25 I know that this is a very emotional moment. Your</p>	<p>1 A. From time to time. 2 Q. Where in your home do you smell the smoke? Or mostly 3 everywhere? 4 A. Yes, mostly everywhere. 5 Q. Did you lodge any complaint? 6 A. No. I saw a lot of notices put up in the lifts, a lot 7 of complaints have been lodged about workers smoking. 8 Q. On the day of the fire, we know that the fire took place 9 in the afternoon of 26 November. Where were you? 10 A. I was home. 11 Q. When did you become aware of the fire? 12 A. 2.50 I smelled some smoke. I just finished cooking. 13 I was trying to find out if I forgot to turn off the 14 stove and then, outside the scaffolding, a worker 15 shouted, "Fire!" I opened the window and I saw some 16 smoke, not very much. Then I shut the window and 17 I left. 18 Q. You heard the worker shouting "Fire!" Did you hear 19 anything else from the workers? 20 A. No. 21 Q. When you opened the window, other than smoke, did you 22 see any flames? 23 A. No. 24 Q. You saw some smoke, you shut the window. What else did 25 you do?</p>
Page 6	Page 8
<p>1 assistance is very important. Thank you very much. 2 (The witness was released) 3 CHAIRMAN: Any involved parties who would like to put 4 questions? No. 5 Next, Ms Wong Ka Yuen. 6 MR DAWES: Good morning, Madam Wong. There is a declaration 7 in front of you. Will you rise and read it out, please. 8 MS WONG KA YUEN (affirmed) 9 Examination by MR DAWES 10 CHAIRMAN: Please be seated, Madam Wong. 11 MR DAWES: Thank you very much for coming. According to 12 your information you are living in Wang Cheong House, 13 1005. Who else is living there? 14 A. My husband and my children. 15 Q. When did you move in? 16 A. 2016, end of, and early 2017. 17 Q. From your evidence, in the course of the renovation 18 you had some observation. We would like to have your 19 assistance there. 20 First, smoking. Can you tell us whether you've seen 21 people smoking, and in the course of renovation, any 22 workers smoking? 23 A. I didn't see them, but since scaffolding has been put up 24 I've smelled smoke coming in. 25 Q. How often does it happen?</p>	<p>1 A. I left home. I saw a man holding a wallet coming in my 2 direction. I recognise all the neighbours. Right 3 outside my door is the staircase. He didn't say 4 anything and he walked down the stairs. And then I saw 5 the neighbours opposite me opening the doors. I asked 6 them if they smelled any smoke. One of them said they 7 rang the management and the management told him that the 8 scaffolding was on fire. And then I kept walking and it 9 was a fire. I said, "I have to call 999." And he said, 10 "You better ring the management office about what 11 happened". I said, "I don't ring the management office, 12 I rang 999." I rang 999. It took a long time for 13 someone to answer and I heard that, "The line is busy, 14 please wait." 15 Q. It's hard for you to say how long you were kept waiting. 16 How many times did you hear that? 17 A. Couple of times. I heard that in English, Cantonese and 18 Putonghua. 19 Q. According to the information, you were the first 20 resident to call 999. 21 A. But why the line was busy? I was kept waiting for 22 a long time. I never thought that I would hear this 23 kind of message. 24 Q. You called 999, you got through. Can you tell us what 25 information you made available to the operator?</p>

Page 9	Page 11
<p>1 A. I told the operator where I was, Wang Cheong Court, 2 10th floor. I smelt something foul, foul smell. 3 I didn't see any flames or smoke and I saw some out of 4 the window and I walked down the stairs. But I forgot 5 to break the fire alarm. 6 Q. We have the recordings of your call to 999. We heard 7 that. After making the call, how did you make an 8 escape? 9 A. I walked down the stairs. 10 Q. Did you see or did you smell any smoke? 11 A. I smelt something, but I didn't see any smoke or fire. 12 There was no urgency to run. I was worried about 13 falling over. I walked down at normal speed. I didn't 14 check the time. At a certain floor it was red outside 15 the window, I was really panicking. I rushed down, 16 I saw the red windows as I went down the stairs. And 17 then I opened the door with a bang and it was the lobby. 18 Q. Can you tell us what floor did you see the windows red? 19 A. Three windows that I saw. 20 Q. You saw the windows and they were the windows on the 21 staircase, the rear staircase? 22 A. Yes. 23 Q. The windows on the rear staircase, were they new 24 windows? 25 A. The red windows were the new windows. At my floor, they</p>	<p>1 A. Can I say what I saw at the lobby? 2 Q. Yes. 3 A. I opened the door with a bang. I saw a woman waiting 4 for the lift and someone pushing a bike, a security 5 guard and a -- I drew a blank; sorry -- a staff from the 6 management office. 7 Q. Yes. 8 A. They saw me opening the door with a bang. I looked at 9 them in panic and I shouted, "Fire!" and then left. 10 I saw the management staff doing something on the desk 11 of the security guard but I don't know what they were 12 doing. 13 Q. And you went to the park? 14 A. Yes, I ran to the park. 15 Q. At the park, what happened? 16 A. At the park I rang my family to tell them our home is on 17 fire. I looked back and there was fire spreading all 18 the way to the top of Wang Cheong Court. 19 Q. Where else did you go? 20 A. I went to my mum's home at Kwong Fuk Estate, Kwong Yau 21 House. 22 Q. You went to your mum's home. Kwong Fuk Estate is right 23 next to Wang Fuk Court. Could she see Wang Fuk Court? 24 A. Yes, very clear. 25 Q. What floor does she live?</p>
Page 10	Page 12
<p>1 were boarded up. 2 Q. You mean your rear staircase. 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. So when you escaped it was still boarded up. You saw 5 the wooden board on the window when you escaped? 6 A. I walked that way, not the other way. The stairs are 7 interlocking. 8 Q. So when you made the escape, you saw the windows boarded 9 up? Did you see them? 10 A. No. 11 Q. But you said on your floor the staircase windows was 12 boarded up. So when did you see that boarded up? 13 A. After the renovation started. 14 Q. In other words, since you left home to the time you went 15 to the lobby, did you experience any breathing 16 difficulties? 17 A. No. 18 Q. When you reached the lobby, what time was it? 19 A. When I reached the lobby, I got to the lobby and I ran 20 out to somewhere near where the park is. I was ringing 21 my family member. It was 2.55, yes. 22 Q. 2.55? 23 A. Yes, 2.55. Maybe 2.54, 2.53 at the lobby. 24 Q. After you left the lobby, you went to the park. Where 25 else did you go?</p>	<p>1 A. 13th. 2 Q. What did you see at your mum's home? 3 A. At my mum's home I saw the fire spreading higher than 4 the Wang Fuk Court. The firemen started putting out the 5 fire and they couldn't put out the fire on the 2nd floor 6 and the entire unit was catching fire, it was all red in 7 the window, and the water couldn't reach that and I saw 8 all red. And then, after a while, the netting caught 9 fire, the entire building was on fire and a moment 10 later -- a few moments later the next block was also on 11 fire. 12 Q. So when you went to your mum's home, you saw the fire 13 spreading. It spread from Wang Cheong House to another 14 block and the other block also caught fire. Can you 15 tell us when was that? 16 A. I didn't pay particular attention at the time, but the 17 fire spread. 18 Q. You stayed at your mum's home and watched the fire? I'm 19 sure you stayed there for a long time, did you? 20 A. Yes. Till evacuation. 21 Q. Was your mum's home evacuated? 22 A. Yes. 23 Q. What time did evacuation take place? 24 A. 4, 5. 25 Q. That's Kwong Fuk Estate, what block?</p>

Page 13	Page 15
<p>1 A. Kwong Yau House.</p> <p>2 Q. Tell us, if you can, you saw the fire spreading from</p> <p>3 Wang Cheong House to the next block. What block are you</p> <p>4 talking about?</p> <p>5 A. One block after another.</p> <p>6 Q. Have you got anything else to tell the Committee?</p> <p>7 A. It may be remote, but I hope that we can get to the</p> <p>8 bottom of the cause of the fire, who started it, or the</p> <p>9 FSD or other departments will explain why they couldn't</p> <p>10 put out the fire, why there wasn't enough fire to put</p> <p>11 out the fire.</p> <p>12 MR DAWES: I've got no further questions.</p> <p>13 CHAIRMAN: Madam Wong, for you to tell us what happened on</p> <p>14 the day must be really difficult. It is really</p> <p>15 emotional. But your presence today is very useful to</p> <p>16 your investigation. Thank you very much for attending</p> <p>17 the hearing.</p> <p>18 Madam Wong was the first one to call 999. Other</p> <p>19 involved parties, any questions?</p> <p>20 MR DAWES: Chairman, she's the first resident to make the</p> <p>21 call of 999. It was a passerby who made the first call.</p> <p>22 CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Madam Wong.</p> <p>23 (The witness was released)</p> <p>24 MR DAWES: Chairman, the next witness is Ms Sin Sin Hing.</p> <p>25 WITNESS: Good morning.</p>	<p>1 A. Yes.</p> <p>2 Q. What year?</p> <p>3 A. I find this regrettable. I remember I was treasurer for</p> <p>4 three terms, but what year did I start, I don't have an</p> <p>5 accurate memory. I retired at the age of 65 and I think</p> <p>6 it was at age 60 that I started that. It's not</p> <p>7 accurate, it's just from memory.</p> <p>8 Q. How long have you retired for?</p> <p>9 A. I retired at 65; 20 years now.</p> <p>10 Q. So you've disclosed your age, I'm sorry about that.</p> <p>11 A. I'm no good at numbers.</p> <p>12 Q. No. You are very clear.</p> <p>13 On the day of the fire you were at home.</p> <p>14 A. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. How did you discover the fire?</p> <p>16 A. I am a fan of recycling, I've been gathering paper that</p> <p>17 I've collected, plastic bags, plastic bottles, glass</p> <p>18 bottles and aluminium cans and so on, I gather them</p> <p>19 together and used a trolley. It was a Tuesday, if</p> <p>20 I remember correctly. I had to catch 71K to the market</p> <p>21 where there is a recycling station. It was very</p> <p>22 convenient for me because I hop on the bus and go to the</p> <p>23 recycling station.</p> <p>24 Because the trolley was not a very big one, I had</p> <p>25 have much recycling materials, so I had to really tidy</p>
Page 14	Page 16
<p>1 MR DAWES: Hello, Ms Sin. You told me to speak louder. Can</p> <p>2 you hear me?</p> <p>3 WITNESS: Yes. I'm hard of hearing and if you put questions</p> <p>4 to me, please speak up a little bit and put it slower.</p> <p>5 Thank you.</p> <p>6 MS SIN SIN HING (affirmed)</p> <p>7 Examination by MR DAWES</p> <p>8 CHAIRMAN: If you can't hear us, please tell us to repeat</p> <p>9 it.</p> <p>10 WITNESS: Thank you.</p> <p>11 MR DAWES: Ms Sin, I know you are living in Wang Tai House,</p> <p>12 1406.</p> <p>13 A. Yes, correct.</p> <p>14 Q. On the day of the fire, other than you, who else was</p> <p>15 living in this unit?</p> <p>16 A. Yes, my younger daughter.</p> <p>17 Q. Ms Sin, we've seen that you gave interview to the media.</p> <p>18 You gave a very clear account of how you made an escape</p> <p>19 on the day of the fire. We'd like you to repeat what</p> <p>20 you said here at this committee. We would like to hear</p> <p>21 from you your observation before the fire and also your</p> <p>22 escape from the fire. Can you tell us?</p> <p>23 A. Okay.</p> <p>24 Q. First of all, let me put this to you. You were the</p> <p>25 treasurer of the Owners' Corporation?</p>	<p>1 them up and when I opened the door to go out, how come</p> <p>2 there was black smoke in the lift lobby? I asked</p> <p>3 myself, could there be a fire? I closed the door at</p> <p>4 once.</p> <p>5 We were told to use wet towels to put under the door</p> <p>6 and I wanted to stand on a chair to work on the upper</p> <p>7 part of the door. I worried I might fall and faint so</p> <p>8 I gave up. I saw smoke coming in through the upper</p> <p>9 cracks of the window and I was worried that even before</p> <p>10 the fire reached me, I could be suffocated.</p> <p>11 Q. Madam Sin, can you tell us at around what time smoke was</p> <p>12 detected?</p> <p>13 A. That is a bit hazy. I felt that it was 1-ish or 2 but</p> <p>14 I heard reports later that the fire started at 2 pm, so</p> <p>15 perhaps I got the time wrong.</p> <p>16 Can I continue with my story?</p> <p>17 Q. Yes, please.</p> <p>18 A. I saw the smoke coming in so I knew what to do. There</p> <p>19 were many small errors of Wang Fuk Court, giving me time</p> <p>20 to run. Because the fire alarm system was not on, I had</p> <p>21 electricity, so I turned on two exhaust fans or three</p> <p>22 exhaust fans of my home so that there was fresh air.</p> <p>23 I opened the door. I wondered if it was good enough.</p> <p>24 I used two mobile fans, blowing out of the window.</p> <p>25 I sat there and waited. I didn't know what to do.</p>

Page 17	Page 19
<p>1 I thought firefighters would come knocking at my door 2 after the fire was put out, so I waited. I saw smoke 3 coming from the door, going out at the window, so I said 4 to myself, it works, so I kept waiting. 5 And then I saw fire spreading to other floors. 6 There was fire from my bathroom window. So I wondered 7 what to do. When I saw smoke, I already called the 8 management office. There was no one to answer the 9 phone. I realised that they were out at work, so I got 10 bored waiting there. I thought it was better to call 11 999, so I did it. 12 During the fire, I called close to 10 times 999 and 13 I was better than the lady before me. I didn't have to 14 wait. Every time my calls got through. 15 Do you want me to go on? 16 Q. Let me ask this question to see if it helps. 17 At 3.36 pm you made a call to 999, so if it was at 18 3.36 then can you think what time it was before, when 19 you found the fire? 20 A. Then it should be 2 pm. I kept thinking how to save 21 myself. I used water to dampen the scaffolding, I used 22 sprinkler to wet the nets. Luckily, my net was not 23 damaged by typhoon so the nets were not replaced. 24 Looking back with hindsight, I came to understand 25 that it was a proper net and the replaced ones were</p>	<p>1 beeping sound. I said I heard it once but then it was 2 gone. 3 The caller asked me to listen for the sound very 4 patiently, they will certainly come, they're coming up. 5 So I listened more patiently and it came again. 6 I opened the door, "Anybody out there?" And I was 7 asked, "Close the door at once. What is your flat 8 number?" And I said, "Since it is so dark, how could 9 you see the flat numbers?" So I banged the door very 10 hard and very soon I was told that, "I know where you 11 are, open the door". So I opened the door. Four came 12 in with a mask and also a light there and the same face 13 mask was pulled on me. And they asked, "Lady, how come 14 there's no smoke in your home?" I said, "Well, 15 I followed what was taught" and then they gave me the 16 thumbs up, and I was told that I had to walk 14 floors 17 down. There was no lift. Could I make it? I said 18 I want to live. 19 Q. Please pause. Can I show you a picture. 20 So this is your home? 21 A. Yes, yes. Exactly. 22 Q. How come it was charred there? 23 A. Yes, yes, it's my home. 24 Q. We understand that your flat is like that. 25 A. Yes, not bad.</p>
Page 18	Page 20
<p>1 inflammable, because I saw the nets burning. 2 For scaffolding, I considered climbing down the 3 scaffolding but then I saw big bamboos falling down, 4 meaning the scaffolding was collapsing. That could 5 happen to my side, so I dare not climb the scaffolding, 6 I might fall, so I waited patiently. Many relatives 7 called me, including those from overseas. 8 I received phone calls, I was on the phone. 9 I missed the first batch of rescuers. I did not know 10 that I have to look for the beeping sound. So I talked 11 to the 999 receptionist. We had some conflict. 12 I apologised to the person because I was not in a good 13 mood. I believe the one who answered my call next was 14 a policeman. He really had the technique. He spoke in 15 soothing voice, telling me that, "I will come very soon 16 and what you should do, I will keep calling you until 17 you have left the scene". 18 So I was relieved, I was not so anxious. I waited 19 patiently and very soon another call came, asking me to 20 hear the beeping sound and I should open the door. 21 I heard that sound, I opened the door, I asked if 22 anybody was there. No one answered. It was pitch dark 23 outside. The smoke was so dense. So I closed the door 24 again at first instance and I listened very carefully 25 again and the call came again to ask if I could hear any</p>	<p>1 Q. And then you mentioned the fan? That's the one? 2 A. Yes. I blew towards the window. 3 Q. So the firefighters arrived, you told them that you used 4 the fan to blow the smoke out of the window. And what 5 happened next? 6 A. They told me to walk down 14 floors. They asked if 7 I could make it. I told them I have to live, I have to 8 do it, by all means. But then, on the 12th floor, there 9 is a big doll. I was told, "You just walk past it, you 10 don't have to worry, be careful that you don't slip." 11 They mentioned that big doll. I had no idea what it 12 was. Perhaps it was a toy left by children when they 13 fled and they asked me not to fear. I wonder why. 14 Perhaps it was a dead body. So that's what I thought. 15 I followed them. 16 It was really pitch dark outside. The flat closest 17 to the lift, a big hole was burned. The fire was still 18 going on. 19 The flat next to me, there was a big crack on the 20 wall so I knew that the flat was on fire. The door was 21 near where the gentleman is, but I could feel the heat. 22 I knew that fire was going on. So I just followed the 23 firefighters. 24 They took me to the 12th floor. They said, "Elderly 25 lady, the big doll is in your way, just walk past it",</p>

Page 21	Page 23
<p>1 and then after that, they told me, "You are safe". The 2 two firemen, I felt that they bowed. I knew that they 3 were carrying the dead body away. Right now I still 4 feel touched. I'm proud of Hong Kong. I'm proud of our 5 very professional firemen. Although it was a dead body 6 but it was so much better for his relatives if it were 7 taken away, otherwise the dead body would be tortured 8 again and again. That's what I thought. 9 Reporters were very helpful in telling this 10 information to the public. 11 Although I didn't know who those four firemen were, 12 but I'm very grateful to them. I'm grateful to the 13 policeman who took my call. They were so comforting. 14 They were able to relieve my very emotional situation. 15 So they held my hand, and when I reached the lower 16 floors, the fireman who led me told me that there were 17 many water hoses. They asked me to try to step on it 18 and to be careful not to sprain my ankle. So I did 19 that, but I almost slipped and then the fireman behind 20 me gave me a lift so luckily I did not slip. So I was 21 led all the way to the ground floor. They told me that 22 I was safe and I would follow them to the ambulance and 23 they would deal with the remaining situation. 24 I may not live very much longer but I believe that 25 experience will remain with me for the rest of my life.</p>	<p>1 construction of some of these facilities. I felt that 2 it was a place for me to spend the rest of my life. 3 I was very content and the park or the landscaping was 4 very good, with a wide variety of species fit to grow in 5 all seasons, so the park was very good, in my opinion. 6 Q. Madam Sin, on this subject do you have anything more to 7 tell the Committee? 8 A. This is my concern. When I first assumed office, there 9 were some strange things that I could not forget. 10 Someone will say in front of me that we should use fresh 11 water to flush the toilet. I said that's not possible, 12 this is banned by the government, we have to use 13 seawater. And then the person used some remarks about 14 scientific wells, but we are a housing development. We 15 do not qualify for that. We're not a hospital or 16 school. We are not qualified to do a tank underground. 17 And when he heard me saying this, he said that he had 18 a phone call and then he never approached me again. 19 The second person said to me that we have to get 20 back the control of the Court and eight IOs should be 21 set up separately for all eight blocks. I asked why. 22 I was told that if applying for works worth less than 23 1 million, then we don't have to report to the 24 government. And then I said, "Why do we have to worry 25 about reporting to the government? At least the</p>
Page 22	Page 24
<p>1 Thank you. I'm proud of Hong Kong. 2 Q. Madam Sin, can you tell me the time when you were saved, 3 what time when they knocked on your door? 4 A. It will be over 9 pm. 5 Q. And when you were saved, you told us that the exhaust 6 fans, the ventilators and also the fan was on. Was 7 there smoke inside? 8 A. There was no smoke. Even the firemen asked me how come 9 there was no smoke. Because the smoke left the flat 10 through the window. 11 Q. On another issue, about the renovation of your housing 12 development, did you see anything that would cause you 13 to worry about the possibility of a fire? 14 A. I am so sorry that I didn't have any fire prevention 15 sense. Because I've lived there for close to four 16 decades, I know the place so well, I have been happy 17 there. The best thing is after I came back with heavy 18 groceries, the passage to Wang Fuk Court was very 19 comfortable. It may not be luxurious development, but 20 then there is a small park. The Owners' Incorporation, 21 I may be blowing my own trumpet but I think the IO has 22 done a lot of good things. There are three children 23 playgrounds, one basketball court, one with physical 24 fitness equipment for the elderly, or for anyone. 25 Let me blow my own trumpet. I was involved in the</p>	<p>1 government should know what we are doing". And then 2 there was no further nuisance from that person. 3 And the third one, this group put together money to 4 sue or to prosecute the past chairman, Mr Sin Shing 5 Cheuk three times and they reported to ICAC, there was 6 investigation, and then I went to the hearing to 7 understand what it was about. I saw him sitting at the 8 lobby. I asked, "Why did you have to sue the past 9 chairman?" And he said, "Because he's suspected of 10 corruption". 11 I said that will not be possible because the 12 chairman only executes what is approved at the general 13 meetings of owners. He had the power to discharge the 14 functions. You really cannot sue him. "Why?" "Because 15 it wasn't the law", "Then what should I do?" "Either 16 you sue the whole PMA or whole IO if you really want to 17 sue him." 18 And then he said, "I really won't be that stupid. 19 If I sue the IO that would mean we have to spend money 20 for ourselves. How can we fight ISS? It's such a big 21 management company". 22 So when I attended the trial to observe what I said 23 was correct, that person insisted on suing Mr Sin. They 24 lost, and they each had to pay \$30,000 for costs. But 25 the one who started that legal action refused to pay, so</p>

Page 25

1 we had to chase him. I told him, "If you refuse to pay,
 2 I will apply for a charge on your flat and you have to
 3 pay us back the debt."
 4 Later -- well, I don't know if I'm allowed to say
 5 this -- at that time the district councillor, Wong Pik
 6 Kiu said to me the legal fees would be paid by her. I
 7 said, "Well, the money given to you by the government is
 8 for the use of the community, to buy gifts for the
 9 elderly and the underprivileged. Why should you pay his
 10 legal fees? He made the mistake. If he didn't have
 11 enough money, he could take out a loan from the bank.
 12 He could repay it himself." That's what I thought.
 13 But in the end it was Wong Pik Kiu who paid the
 14 legal fees. That puzzled me.
 15 So these three questions have been plaguing me.
 16 Now, what we've learned, was there careful planning
 17 involved? That's what I think. Please don't put it on
 18 record. It's just what I thought. But would they have
 19 such a large amount of patience to make such careful
 20 planning over a very long time?
 21 MR DAWES: I don't have any other questions for you. Thank
 22 you, Ms Sin.
 23 CHAIRMAN: Other involved parties, any questions from you?
 24 Ms Sin, I think you are the pride of Hong Kong as
 25 well. In an emergency, you were resourceful enough to

Page 26

1 find a way to survive. Your evidence has helped us.
 2 This is a tragedy. You have helped us. You have given
 3 us positive vibes. We are very proud of you. Thank you
 4 for attending.
 5 WITNESS: Thank you for your kind words. Thank you very
 6 much.
 7 (The witness was released)
 8 MR DAWES: Perhaps we can take a break now, for a longer
 9 break as well, if we're allowed. Can we ask for
 10 25 minutes?
 11 CHAIRMAN: We will resume in 25 minutes.
 12 (11.03 am)
 13 (A short adjournment)
 14 (11.28 am)
 15 CHAIRMAN: Mr Dawes.
 16 MR DAWES: The next witness is Mr Chan Chuen, Joe.
 17 Hello, Mr Chan. There is a declaration in front of
 18 you. Please rise to your feet and read it out.
 19 MR CHAN CHUEN, JOE (affirmed)
 20 Examination by MR DAWES
 21 MR DAWES: Please be seated, Mr Chan.
 22 Mr Chan, thank you very much for coming to the
 23 hearing. You are living in Wang Cheong House, 605?
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. Other than you, what other family members are there?

Page 27

1 A. I live with my wife.
 2 Q. According to your police statement on that day, on
 3 26 November, you had some contact with the workers
 4 working on the renovation. Can you tell us more?
 5 A. On the day, about 8 or 9 o'clock I heard some noise.
 6 I heard some workers who were working on the tiles. I
 7 was inquisitive, I opened the window and asked them how
 8 long it would take and the worker told me, "The four of
 9 us will spend one day to complete the job".
 10 After talking to them, I closed the windows and
 11 I didn't have any more conversation.
 12 Q. That was the first time you had any communication with
 13 the workers?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. Let me take you back to the fire. When and how did you
 16 discover the fire?
 17 A. It was in the afternoon. I was home. It was about 2.51
 18 I smelled something like something burning, and
 19 immediately I rang the management office and let the
 20 staff know about it. I asked them to find out what
 21 actually happened and I hung up.
 22 Three to five minutes later I felt that there was
 23 some flames on the outer wall. At 2.51 I felt there was
 24 something wrong and the management office couldn't do
 25 anything about it. I rang 999 and I told the officer

Page 28

1 about the situation. And where my kitchen is, there was
 2 some smoke starting off being white and then it turned
 3 into black. Within a space of one or two minutes, the
 4 smoke came in.
 5 Q. Did you hear anything, any noise?
 6 A. At that time I called the police and I heard someone
 7 saying that, "The fire is out of control, get out".
 8 I heard it from outside the window. I don't know where
 9 the noise came from.
 10 Q. According to the record, at 2.56 pm you called 999 and
 11 the police picked up the phone 32 seconds later. Do you
 12 have any recollection about your conversation with the
 13 officer or the fire services?
 14 A. I told them about the address, I told them about the
 15 fire and I said some smoke came into my home and I had
 16 to run.
 17 Q. Okay. Then you finished the call, you escaped from your
 18 unit?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. What did you see?
 21 A. The smoke started off being white and then it turned
 22 into black, really thick black smoke, like something out
 23 of a movie, really intense, black smoke. That is what
 24 I saw on that day.
 25 Q. You talked about the smoke. Did the smoke pour into

Page 29

1 your home or you saw it in the hallway?

2 A. It was from the kitchen area, it had entered the

3 hallway. The situation was serious and I had to run.

4 In the morning I went out, I had my bag at the hallway.

5 I grabbed my bag and ran. Before I ran, I had to lock

6 the door with key, and I opened the door to grab the key

7 and I saw the smoke was really pouring into the sitting

8 area. I didn't stay and I just ran without locking the

9 door. I didn't bring my keys and ran.

10 Q. You mentioned the smoke. Where did the smoke come from?

11 A. From the kitchen area.

12 Q. Any smoke in the corridor?

13 A. Not so much in the corridor.

14 Q. How did you escape?

15 A. Along the staircases from the 6th floor to the ground

16 floor, to the lobby.

17 Q. Any smoke in the staircases?

18 A. At that time I didn't pay much attention because I was

19 really trying to run away, so I didn't notice the

20 environment. I smelled some smell, not very intense,

21 not as much as what I smelled at home.

22 Q. You ran from the 6th floor to the ground floor. Did you

23 see anybody else?

24 A. On my way down I saw a fellow resident. I ran together

25 with him. Halfway down the person said he/she felt

Page 30

1 really bad and I grabbed him/her to run together.

2 Q. Did you hear any fire alarm?

3 A. No, no fire alarm all the way.

4 Q. You reached the lobby. Can you tell us what happened?

5 A. At the lobby I didn't see many people. I went to the

6 next block, Wang Tai House. I looked back at

7 Wang Cheong House. I saw less than a dozen people and

8 I was the first -- one of the first ones to leave. The

9 place was deserted and it's hard for me to recall the

10 scene.

11 Q. You took a picture. Let's show you the picture on the

12 screen. That's what you took. When did you take the

13 picture?

14 A. That's when I walk out from Wang Tai House and looked

15 back. The fire was spreading to the front door, and

16 that's at the back. So the fire was spreading pretty

17 rapidly.

18 Q. Do you have any recollection when was the picture taken?

19 A. 3.09 or thereabout. 3.09.

20 Q. Okay. Let me turn away from the fire back to the time

21 before the fire, during the renovation.

22 About fire safety, do you have any information that

23 you can give us?

24 A. At that stage of renovation, on two occasions, from my

25 recollection, there were workers smoking at work.

Page 31

1 I remember vividly one time, because the worker was

2 transporting some materials using a trolley, and he was

3 having a cigarette between his lips. And the other one,

4 when he was leaving the building, he was also having

5 a cigarette between his lips. It is beyond my duty to

6 tell him off, to call him out, but I was shaking my

7 head. It says a lot about the supervision of the

8 contractor. There are so many problems.

9 Q. Is there anything else you'd like to tell the Committee?

10 A. When I escaped, I felt everything was quiet. I didn't

11 hear any human noise or any fire alarm. I didn't hear

12 anything at all when I reached the ground floor. Things

13 could have been better. The management office should

14 have used a loudhailer to call people to leave but I

15 didn't hear anything like that at all.

16 Also, why is it there was no fire alarm going off?

17 I think for building maintenance/renovation, this is

18 something that we should pay attention to. Without the

19 fire alarm, it caused really severe fatalities. The

20 fire alarm was disabled and the residents didn't receive

21 any information at all.

22 I hope that for building renovation, this is

23 something that should be reviewed. There should be

24 precautionary measures. There should be some other

25 alternatives to that. Something must be done about it

Page 32

1 to prevent a repeat of a similar incident.

2 It is something that I feel about. There is so much

3 casualty. We are really in tears when we talk about it.

4 We were kept waiting at the community hall. A resident

5 was waiting from 3 pm all the way till evening and her

6 husband never appeared.

7 Later, when I met her and asked her about it, I came

8 to know that her husband passed away. I used to see

9 them, a family of three. Their child was a secondary

10 schoolchild, they were happy, but I can no longer see

11 that picture. It's very sad. I don't really want to

12 see a repeat of such incident.

13 Furthermore, our housing development has buildings

14 30-odd storeys tall. Now, high rises have even more

15 floors. Is fire safety sufficient? Is FSI sufficient?

16 It is something for the Architectural Services

17 Department and other departments to consider. With

18 buildings as tall as 70 floors, are there sufficient

19 FSIs? People with knowledge should think about this.

20 That's all I have to say.

21 MR DAWES: Thank you. I have no further questions, chair.

22 CHAIRMAN: Any question from the involved parties? If not,

23 we can understand it is painful for you to have

24 witnessed what happened that day. In any event, your

25 statement and evidence is very important. Hopefully,

Page 33

1 through investigation, we will not see a repeat of this
 2 accident. We will do our utmost to complete the
 3 investigation and not to let you down. Thank you.
 4 Thank you for coming.
 5 (The witness was released)
 6 MR DAWES: Chair, the next witness is Mr Cheung Chi Lim.
 7 Mr Cheung, good morning. I know you have a problem
 8 with your mobility. If you don't mind, you can read the
 9 declaration in front of you while sitting.
 10 MR CHEUNG CHI LIM, GEORGE (affirmed)
 11 Examination by MR DAWES
 12 MR DAWES: Mr Cheung, good morning.
 13 Information shows that you live in 1006 of Wang Tai
 14 House.
 15 A. Correct.
 16 Q. Apart from yourself, who lives with you at that address?
 17 A. Myself, my wife and my 19-year-old son.
 18 Q. When did you move to Wang Fuk Court?
 19 A. I was a first time owner. 1983 I started living there,
 20 until now.
 21 Q. I understand that on the day of the fire you and your
 22 wife were inside your flat. Can you tell us how you
 23 came to learn of the fire?
 24 A. I was taking an afternoon nap and my phone's WhatsApp
 25 alerted me. I could clearly remember the time. It was

Page 34

1 3.07. A friend took a picture showing heavy smoke at
 2 Wang Fuk Court. The message from him was there was,
 3 "Heavy smoke at Wang Fuk Court, see whether there is."
 4 So I opened the window and looked down. I live in 06,
 5 facing Wang Cheong and Wang Shing. There is
 6 a roundabout and also a refuse collection centre, a big
 7 RC point. It was on fire.
 8 There was two fire engines, lights on but no sirens.
 9 I could not hear any fire alarm, no one shouting "Fire".
 10 I thought the refuse collection point was on fire so
 11 I told my wife that the refuse collection point was on
 12 fire and the fire was quite big.
 13 And then I looked towards Wang Cheong House, I saw
 14 flames, flashes and nets on fire flying towards our net.
 15 They stuck there. I told my wife, "Our window is on
 16 fire. We have to put out the fire." I told my wife to
 17 get water from the toilet. She used buckets. I opened
 18 the window, I climbed on to the scaffolding, I used
 19 water to put out the fire.
 20 I walked all the way and on my right-hand side I saw
 21 flat 1005, the toilet there, the scaffolding net was on
 22 fire. The fire was very strong.
 23 And then flat 1007, the bedroom, the net of the
 24 bedroom window was on fire. And then there were fire
 25 sparks falling on to my hair, even my hair was on fire.

Page 35

1 I brushed it away and then I climbed into my flat
 2 telling my wife to escape. I closed the window and
 3 opened the door and planned to leave.
 4 Q. You took a video; right?
 5 A. Yes. We could not leave. The video is one minute long.
 6 Q. We can take a look at the video.
 7 (Video played)
 8 A. This is the refuse collection point. I opened the
 9 window to take video. The fire was quite strong.
 10 VIDEO RECORDING: Go take water to put out the fire,
 11 quickly. Give me a bucket of water. My home is on
 12 fire. Mum, get water. Call the management office.
 13 MR DAWES: That was the first video. We will also show you
 14 pictures and footage. Because you were very smart, you
 15 took videos. Can you remember when was the video taken?
 16 A. Can I take a look at the footage?
 17 Q. The footage, please. The one we played just now, when
 18 was it taken?
 19 A. When I saw the WhatsApp message sent by my friend at
 20 15:07, I opened the window at once to take a video. So
 21 it would be within a couple of minutes, around 09.
 22 Q. When you found that you could not put out the fire you
 23 started to escape from the unit?
 24 A. Yes, I planned to do that.
 25 Q. Can you tell us what happened next?

Page 36

1 A. I use a Xiaomi doorbell, it has a camera. I opened the
 2 door wanting to leave with my wife. I remember that
 3 flat 1005, a neighbour who moved in one or two years
 4 ago, his surname is Yim and he's like myself, about late
 5 50s. His mobility is poor. I knocked on his door to
 6 see if he was around. I said to myself, "Hopefully he
 7 will not come to the door", meaning that he was not at
 8 home. But then he answered my knock, he opened the
 9 door. I told him, "Let's escape, there's a fire".
 10 I asked my wife to take him to the means of escape
 11 because the right-hand side of flat 05 is the door for
 12 the means of escape. He opened the door and told me,
 13 "No, it's impossible. The smoke is very heavy, coming
 14 up like cones", so he closed the door.
 15 Q. I want to show you a video we watched at the beginning
 16 of the hearing.
 17 (Video played)
 18 VIDEO RECORDING: The flat is on fire.
 19 A. This was taken at 15:16. I opened the door hoping to
 20 escape. There was no smoke. The site was very clear.
 21 MR DAWES: And then what happened next?
 22 A. I knocked on a closed door. We opened the door of the
 23 means of escape. It was very -- the smoke was heavy.
 24 In the construction industry I understand that the
 25 building has interlocking stairs. I understand that if

<p>Page 37</p> <p>1 there is smoke in this staircase, there might not be 2 smoke in the other. So as I put on my shoes, I asked my 3 wife to go and see. My wife was very anxious. Very 4 soon she came back telling me that that won't do, 5 there's heavy smoke, and then a cloud of black smoke 6 followed her. That was the situation. 7 Q. Was it very soon after we saw that video taken from your 8 doorbell ring camera? 9 A. Yes. Both staircases were filled with smoke. 10 Q. According to your understanding back then, could you 11 tell how the smoke got into the staircases? 12 A. I am not sure, but I guess it was because of the window 13 facing the lift lobby, there is a window dimension about 14 6 by 8 inches. I saw that whether was always open 15 because the corridor was stuffy. Perhaps the smoke came 16 in because of chimney effect. That could be possible. 17 Q. Before the fire, can you tell us whether the windows 18 were open or closed most of the time? 19 A. Open. Because the corridor was very stuffy. So it was 20 always open. 21 Q. Let us show you another video footage. 22 (Video played) 23 A. So that was taken at 15:17, one minute afterwards. So 24 I took the elderly woman into my flat. Because the 25 smoke was so heavy, there was no way to escape, we had</p>	<p>Page 39</p> <p>1 at least four to five calls within an hour to myself, to 2 my wife and to my neighbour. 3 Q. And we know that you made further videos. 4 (Video played) 5 A. Now the time is around 4 or 5. It was very dark. 6 I wanted to tell the situation outside. I opened the 7 window, took video, and then outside the bedroom of 8 1007, it was on fire. 1007, the bedroom of 1007. 9 Q. Can you tell us, please look at the place where the fire 10 was very big, can you tell us where the fire was? 11 A. The scaffolding outside the bedroom of 1007, it was on 12 fire. 13 Q. There should be smoke inside your flat, was there? 14 A. Very heavy smoke. We tried to block the door gaps, but 15 we could not block all. There was also smoke from the 16 exhaust fan, from the hood of the exhaust fan. 17 By 5 pm, my wife told me, "How about I hide in the 18 toilet, you and the neighbour hide in the bedroom. We 19 each have half a bucket of water". And we waited for 20 rescue. The situation was really bad. It was so dark, 21 we could not see anything. We used a wet towel to 22 shield our mouth and within a few minutes the towel 23 would be dry. 24 My neighbour could not sit on the floor. I asked 25 her to sit or even lie on my bed. She didn't lay down.</p>
<p>Page 38</p> <p>1 to save ourselves inside our flat. 2 Q. What did you do after returning to your flat? 3 A. Myself and my wife opened the door, trying to put out 4 the fire. My wife took water to splash the net wet, 5 hopefully to retard the spread of the fire. My 6 neighbour was not good at walking so she sat at the 7 sofa. Myself and my wife kept pouring water onto the 8 nets. 9 Maybe in around after 20 minutes there was no power 10 supply. The whole flat was dark. We relied on our 11 senses to keep splashing water. Then my wife told me 12 that, "There's no water". We are using water from the 13 water tank on the 10th floor and then there was no more 14 water from the tap. I asked my wife, "How much more 15 water do we have?" "One bucket", she said. Then 16 I said, "Let's not use that bucket. It's for 17 life-saving". 18 So we closed the door, we sat in the sitting room to 19 save ourselves. 20 Q. We know that you called 999. When did you do it? 21 A. I'm not sure. Because myself and my wife both had made 22 999 calls. The woman from my neighbouring flat also 23 called, and from time to time there were return calls 24 from the firemen asking me how many persons were in the 25 flat, our age, our whereabouts, et cetera. There were</p>	<p>Page 40</p> <p>1 I gave her a wet towel and we waited for rescue. 2 Q. At around what time were you rescued, do you know? 3 A. No. When we turned -- we became desperate at around 4 6.30 pm. We almost gave up. Because the neighbour told 5 me, "Mr Cheung, I cannot breathe, I cannot go on any 6 more", and I was rather confused. I told her I feel 7 very uncomfortable. My wife heard us in the toilet. 8 She prayed for us. She encouraged us. She said that 9 "We will surely be saved, hand ourselves over to God". 10 When the fireman called, I lost my temper. I said, 11 "How come you keep asking me how many persons are there? 12 You have not come to rescue us. I could go online, 13 I saw 43 deaths already. If you do not come at once, 14 you can add another three to the death toll", and then 15 I hung up. 16 At around 8 pm -- my wife was more alert, she told 17 me that it was 8 pm -- at 8 pm we heard knocks but I was 18 too tired. I wanted to sleep. I did not want to go up 19 to answer the door. I asked my wife to do it. I was 20 not very conscious. And then I heard a loud knock, and 21 then I said to myself, "My door cost a few thousand 22 dollars. It won't do if you break it". So I jumped up 23 to open the door. I could only feel my way out. 24 I could feel that this is the piano, the dining table, I 25 kept feeling and then I reached the door. It was</p>

Page 41	Page 43
<p>1 scorching.</p> <p>2 I tried to open the lock but it was very tight; I</p> <p>3 could not press the button. I heard people bumping on</p> <p>4 to the door. I said, "Don't, don't bump into my door,</p> <p>5 don't damage my lock, the number lock is very</p> <p>6 expensive". And then I gave them the code and then they</p> <p>7 came in. The heat came in together. I saw five to six</p> <p>8 angels. I'm a Christian. "How come there are so many</p> <p>9 angels?" There's a halo above the heads of the angels</p> <p>10 and that turned out to be the headlamps of the</p> <p>11 firefighters. I thought they were angels. I thought</p> <p>12 I had died because I could see angels.</p> <p>13 And then the firefighter shouted at me and asked,</p> <p>14 "Did anyone get hurt? Where are they?" So that shook</p> <p>15 me back to reality. But still, I was in a daze.</p> <p>16 Who was going to leave first? I was at the door.</p> <p>17 Would it be me? But there was an elderly lady that</p> <p>18 I brought into the flat. Perhaps she should go first.</p> <p>19 But if that was the case, it would be difficult because</p> <p>20 we had to help her and she wasn't too mobile. She could</p> <p>21 trip and die. Perhaps, I thought, well, let's save my</p> <p>22 wife first because she was the lucid one.</p> <p>23 Then I heard a voice, "I'm next to you". It was my</p> <p>24 wife. I couldn't see her and the firefighter took her</p> <p>25 and led her out.</p>	<p>1 losing my consciousness.</p> <p>2 We were going down, I was asked to lift my leg up</p> <p>3 but I didn't know what my leg would touch. I felt it</p> <p>4 touched something circular. I didn't know if it was</p> <p>5 a fire hose or not.</p> <p>6 When we went down, there was an ambulance man</p> <p>7 lifting me to the ambulance and I was sent to the ICU.</p> <p>8 I'm very grateful to the firefighters. It was a</p> <p>9 horrible sight at the ICU. I don't want to go into it.</p> <p>10 But I'm so grateful to the firefighters for saving my</p> <p>11 life.</p> <p>12 Q. There are still some other photos and clips. It</p> <p>13 recorded the condition of your flat.</p> <p>14 Do you know who took this picture?</p> <p>15 A. I don't think it is my flat. There weren't so many</p> <p>16 items in my home. But it's similar to my flat. I think</p> <p>17 it's a bedroom covered with foam board. I don't really</p> <p>18 have much recollection of this.</p> <p>19 Q. Now, we take you to what had happened afterwards.</p> <p>20 You were in the maintenance renovation trade. Have</p> <p>21 you retired?</p> <p>22 A. I retired in 2018.</p> <p>23 Q. I'm sure you're very sensitive when it comes to this</p> <p>24 topic. I want to ask you some more questions. When it</p> <p>25 comes to fire safety arrangements and fire services</p>
Page 42	Page 44
<p>1 Then there was another person in the bedroom. The</p> <p>2 firefighter went in to lift the elderly lady out. I was</p> <p>3 quite limp. I asked the firefighter, "Do you have any</p> <p>4 breathing apparatus?" I was given a mask to cover my</p> <p>5 mouth. There was no oxygen supply. I was asked to get</p> <p>6 on to the back of the firefighter to be lifted away but</p> <p>7 I was too limp to do that. I tried to see but</p> <p>8 I couldn't see anything. I was taken away via the</p> <p>9 staircase.</p> <p>10 It was tough for the firefighter because only after</p> <p>11 a few steps he tripped and went down, taking me with</p> <p>12 him. That image is etched in my head; I will never</p> <p>13 forget that.</p> <p>14 At that time, I saw that there was water coming down</p> <p>15 the stairs. It was hot like in an onsen. The</p> <p>16 firefighter asked me to take hold of something to prop</p> <p>17 myself up to climb onto his back, but everything was so</p> <p>18 hot and we couldn't do it. I went a few more steps and</p> <p>19 I tripped and I felt that someone was pulling me, and it</p> <p>20 was then I realised I was on the 9th floor. I tried and</p> <p>21 tried.</p> <p>22 We went down a few more floors and I asked the</p> <p>23 firefighter, "How far are we from our destination?"</p> <p>24 I was told "soon". I wanted to say to him, "I feel</p> <p>25 really tired and lethargic, just leave me here". I was</p>	<p>1 installations before the maintenance work, did you ask</p> <p>2 any questions or express any concern?</p> <p>3 A. Yes, I did. I did something to help the residents.</p> <p>4 When there was a new OC, owners' corporation, I raised</p> <p>5 a number of issues. I said covering the eight blocks</p> <p>6 with net in one go was very dangerous. I said that if</p> <p>7 there was a fire, then it would take hold of all eight</p> <p>8 blocks. I think that the new OC had expressed this view</p> <p>9 to the government. My suggestion was we started with</p> <p>10 four blocks and then the other few blocks in the second</p> <p>11 batch.</p> <p>12 I also mentioned about the foam board as well as the</p> <p>13 access opening along the stairs. I've raised this issue</p> <p>14 to the OC as well as to Prestige. I said it wouldn't</p> <p>15 do. It was dangerous, I said.</p> <p>16 My wife loves working out. She used to run up and</p> <p>17 down the stairs two to three times a week. I did it</p> <p>18 with her as well. I remember between the 9th and 10th</p> <p>19 floors there was an access opening. I saw some Coke</p> <p>20 bottles with water in but I saw cigarette butts inside.</p> <p>21 The door was open. I could smell smoke. We don't</p> <p>22 smoke. I mentioned it to Prestige, "I have taken</p> <p>23 photographs of some cigarette boxes on scaffolding."</p> <p>24 I went to Prestige to talk to them. I told them about</p> <p>25 the cigarette boxes. I said it was dangerous. They</p>

Page 45	Page 47
<p>1 told me they would follow up and they said, "There were 2 cigarette boxes on scaffolding but it doesn't mean that 3 it wasn't thrown from upper floors, doesn't necessarily 4 mean that they belong to our workers." And then, after 5 a while, they came to remove our air-conditioners to 6 repair the platform. But there was a cigarette box 7 there. 8 I mentioned this and the foreman took a picture. 9 I said that the cigarette box on the air-conditioning 10 platform surely wasn't something thrown down from upper 11 floors. 12 Q. Who did you talk to when it comes to foam boards? 13 A. The new OC. In the evening, very often a group of them 14 would go there to talk, to discuss matters. I mentioned 15 this. I said there were problems -- I said there are 16 problems with the access openings, with the foam board 17 as well as doing all the blocks in one batch. I think 18 they have made complaints and actions were taken. 19 Q. Before the fire you had made some observations and 20 complaints. Is there anything else that you'd like to 21 tell the Committee? 22 A. I would like to see the truth out. I hope that the 23 government will tackle this problem head-on. I made 24 complaints but different departments said that it was 25 not under their purview. Residents of Wang Fuk Court</p>	<p>1 I don't have any other questions. 2 CHAIRMAN: Questions from other involved parties? 3 Examination by MR TAM 4 MR TAM: Mr Cheung, I represent a number of residents. I'd 5 like to seek some clarifications. Towards the end of 6 your evidence, you said that you complained several 7 times and you mentioned about government departments. 8 To whom did you lodge the complaint? Government 9 departments? Prestige? 10 A. I did with Prestige. I had a discussion with -- about 11 the issues with the new OC. I remember sometimes 12 government departments attended meetings. We were in 13 a community hall. The issues were raised. We mentioned 14 about these issues to district councillors as well. 15 Q. What about yourself and your complaints? 16 A. I made complaints to the OC and Prestige. They replied 17 to me. The OC said that they have made a complaint and 18 they replied to me. 19 MR TAM: That's all from me. 20 CHAIRMAN: Questions from any other involved parties? We 21 have heard you loud and clear, Mr Chan. We do 22 understand that it's very difficult for you to retell 23 the story again but your evidence is very important to 24 our investigation. We will do our utmost to find the 25 truth to stop the tragedy from happening again.</p>
Page 46	Page 48
<p>1 were helpless. There was a great sacrifice. Over 2 160 lives. Homes were destroyed. Lives were lost. We 3 appealed to the government. Finally, the nets were 4 taken down and there were prosecutions, but it's a huge 5 cost. 6 I hope that the Committee will find the truth and 7 find the parties that are responsible. We don't want to 8 see another tragedy like this. What I'd like to say to 9 residents is stay strong, we need to ride out this 10 storm. I am seeing professional help in the form of 11 psychiatrists. I've lot of everything. I have 12 a miserable life. I used to work part-time earning 13 \$20,000 but now I can't work anymore. My wife is not in 14 a better place. 15 I thank the firefighters and the ambulance men. 16 I thank them for rescuing me and saving me. I thank the 17 lord. I thank the media. They've worked hard to 18 uncover the truth but I hope that they won't interview 19 me on my way out because that will be inflicting harm on 20 me again. It's seriously harm inflicted on residents. 21 I will tell my story when there is a chance. We can 22 make a film out of this but I just ask for the 23 understanding of media, just let me leave in peace. 24 I don't want to be inflicted harm anymore. 25 Q. I'm sure that the media will understand.</p>	<p>1 I thank you for your bravery, for coming here to 2 tell us about what happened which is really tragic. But 3 again what you said is very important to us. Thank you. 4 WITNESS: Well, I planned to come here with my wife but 5 I didn't want her to get hurt again, that's why 6 I stopped her from coming again. 7 CHAIRMAN: You made an appeal to the media. I'm sure 8 they've heard you. Thank you. 9 WITNESS: Thank you. 10 (The witness was released) 11 MR DAWES: The next witness is Mr Cheng King Hei. 12 Mr Cheng, please read the declaration in front of 13 you. 14 MR CHENG KING HEI (affirmed) 15 Examination by MR DAWES 16 MR DAWES: Please be seated, Mr Cheng. 17 Information shows that you live in 108 of Wang Tai 18 House, so it's on the lower floor. 19 A. Yes. 20 Q. During the fire, were you living with any family 21 members? 22 A. On the day of the fire, no. Luckily, in the morning of 23 25 November I sent my wife to travel in China. The 24 evening of the 25th my son was staying with his friend 25 so from then onwards I was with my poodle, Toffee, in</p>

Page 49	Page 51
<p>1 the flat.</p> <p>2 Q. During the maintenance works, in relation to fire</p> <p>3 hazards and risk, did you have any observations? Did</p> <p>4 you make any complaint?</p> <p>5 A. Around Easter 2024 and before the new year, on</p> <p>6 29 December, as usual, I would check my windows because</p> <p>7 there was some chiselling and afterwards, my window was</p> <p>8 covered with foam board. My understanding was foam</p> <p>9 board was flammable so there was a fire risk. That's</p> <p>10 why very often I would check, I would check outside my</p> <p>11 kitchen window.</p> <p>12 Outside that, there was a light well and near the</p> <p>13 toilet I also opened that window to see if there was any</p> <p>14 rubbish. In the master bedroom, outside the window,</p> <p>15 I often saw rubbish. I also saw leftover from tailored</p> <p>16 foam board, the leftover bits of the foam board were</p> <p>17 left near the light well.</p> <p>18 I don't remember if it was on two or three</p> <p>19 occasions -- well, I knew that the works was undertaken</p> <p>20 by Prestige -- I talked to a Mr Ho through WhatsApp. I</p> <p>21 said, "It doesn't work, please educate your workers,</p> <p>22 clean up before and after each day. I just want peace</p> <p>23 of mind." Mr Tam, a person in charge of the</p> <p>24 construction site, replied to me and said arrangements</p> <p>25 would be made. They said that actually there were</p>	<p>1 why they did not seal the toilet. They did not cover</p> <p>2 the opening of the exhaust fan at the kitchen. So from</p> <p>3 time to time we would turn on the fan for ventilation</p> <p>4 and circulation.</p> <p>5 Q. On the day of the fire, was there foam board covering</p> <p>6 all your windows?</p> <p>7 A. Yes. Foam board was used to cover the bathroom window.</p> <p>8 At about 12.30-something on 26 November, when I took my</p> <p>9 poodle down, at that time the windows were still</p> <p>10 covered.</p> <p>11 Q. Let's go to the material day. Where were you when you</p> <p>12 realised there was a fire at Wang Fuk?</p> <p>13 A. As I said, on the 25th my wife went to the mainland to</p> <p>14 travel and my son was sleeping at a friend's and then</p> <p>15 went to work and did not come back. At about 12.38 it</p> <p>16 was my habit to take a photo when I left. It was 12.38.</p> <p>17 I took my dog downstairs.</p> <p>18 Usually, it would be very quick, it would go</p> <p>19 directly to the back of Wang Tai House and do its</p> <p>20 business, but on that day it behaved strangely, it went</p> <p>21 around to Wang Cheong and went out of the gate. It was</p> <p>22 a beautiful day. It was playing at Yuen Chau Tsai park.</p> <p>23 I took pictures. It refused to go home. And then I</p> <p>24 went up to the footbridge, crossed the Lam Tsuen River</p> <p>25 to the other side and walked northward to Tai Po centre.</p>
Page 50	Page 52
<p>1 arrangements put in place. They immediately cleaned up</p> <p>2 the rubbish as well as the flammable foam board.</p> <p>3 I still had the habit of checking by opening the</p> <p>4 window. When I spotted problems, I would inform them.</p> <p>5 In my mind, foam board during a maintenance project is</p> <p>6 a major fire risk to me. I monitored the situation, but</p> <p>7 I don't have a chance to continue to do that anymore.</p> <p>8 Q. Apart from foam board and other flammable materials in</p> <p>9 the light well, do you know that there were workers</p> <p>10 gathering at the light well?</p> <p>11 A. I could hear them, I could see them. Well, when</p> <p>12 I opened the work, I saw them work but I did not see</p> <p>13 them smoke. If I did, I would scold them immediately</p> <p>14 and report immediately to the person in charge at</p> <p>15 Prestige. Because I would be the first victim. That's</p> <p>16 something that I would definitely do.</p> <p>17 Q. In relation to your flat, can you recall when were the</p> <p>18 windows covered by foam boards?</p> <p>19 A. It was around November, December or after November,</p> <p>20 December. But they were chiselling the external tiles</p> <p>21 away and we started to use masking tape to seal all the</p> <p>22 gaps because there was a lot of dust. We lived as if</p> <p>23 we're living in a desert. They wanted to cover the</p> <p>24 toilet window. I said, "No, because if that happened,</p> <p>25 we would be living in a vacuum. We would die." That's</p>	<p>1 It still refused to go home.</p> <p>2 We went around and came back, went around Plover</p> <p>3 Cover, towards Kwong Fuk. I thought, well, we've been</p> <p>4 out for a few hours, so I took it back. At Kwong Fuk</p> <p>5 Court, next to Wang Fuk Court, at around 3 o'clock or so</p> <p>6 I heard siren from fire engines. I didn't find it</p> <p>7 surprising. However, when I reached the market of</p> <p>8 Wang Fuk Court, I saw a lot of people were taking</p> <p>9 photos. I saw that at a distance there was a lot of</p> <p>10 smoke about five or six blocks away.</p> <p>11 At that time I wasn't sure where the fire was but</p> <p>12 when I went closer, it was the road close to Wang Fuk</p> <p>13 Court. From a distance, I saw that there was heavy</p> <p>14 smoke at Wang Cheong House, there was a small fire. But</p> <p>15 I heard fire engine having arrived and I realised there</p> <p>16 are firefighters. I'm sure that they would be able to</p> <p>17 put out the fire.</p> <p>18 The residents were taking photographs and videos.</p> <p>19 I did the same. But the more photos I took, the more</p> <p>20 wrong I felt. The wind was blowing from blocks 7, 6,</p> <p>21 and then 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. When I was there, it was 15:03.</p> <p>22 I walked further and further out. About 10 minutes</p> <p>23 later, the fire was really spreading really rapidly like</p> <p>24 a chimney effect.</p> <p>25 I talked to the residents, they had to run to save</p>

Page 53	Page 55
<p>1 their lives. I saw some helpers walking with the old 2 ladies. There is a footbridge near Wang Fuk Court. 3 I told them not to sit around there. I also ran away 4 and I ran all the way to Kwong Fuk Estate and looked 5 back at Wang Tai and Wang Cheong Houses and the fire was 6 already spreading very rapidly and it spread to block 4 7 -- I am block 5, Wang Tai House, 1st floor, flat 8. 8 I saw a lot of debris falling down and I cried a bit of 9 tears. 10 I then went to Kwong Fuk Estate, I went to the 2nd 11 floor and I took some pictures there. My younger son, 12 my older son, my second daughter kept ringing me. 13 "Mr Cheng, why aren't you running away? Are you going 14 to be like a roasted pig?" 15 Some staff members told me to go to the community 16 hall and I said the community hall would be even more 17 dangerous. If the fire spread there, it would be really 18 serious. 19 I went to Kwong Fuk Estate 2nd floor and the area 20 was cleared by the police and I had to leave and I told 21 people not to go to the community hall. Run, better go 22 further away. 23 At about 4 or 5, my eldest son finished work, they 24 finished work and took us away. That's what happened. 25 Q. Thank you. Before the fire you had some observation and</p>	<p>1 peace and I hope that there will not be a repeat of this 2 tragedy. 3 CHAIRMAN: I have heard you very clearly and will bear what 4 you said firmly in mind. We will get on with our work. 5 Thank you. 6 WITNESS: Thanks very much. 7 (The witness was released) 8 MR DAWES: Chairman, we have six witnesses for this morning. 9 We have some time. I know that the counsel of the 10 Competition Commission would like to report to members 11 on something. Perhaps I will give the floor to the 12 Competition Commission. 13 CHAIRMAN: Yes, please. 14 Submissions by MR LESTER LEE 15 MR LESTER LEE: Thank you, chairman, members. The 16 Competition Commission would like to make a short 17 statement. 18 I know that in terms of the bid-rigging syndicate we 19 have brought proceedings against six entities, eight 20 people dealing with bid-rigging, market-sharing and 21 price-fixing. 22 I'd like to, on behalf of the Competition 23 Commission, make three important statements. First, 24 this case is -- the allegation of the Competition 25 Commission, the respondents have not really got the</p>
Page 54	Page 56
<p>1 you also told us what happened. What else do you have 2 to say? 3 A. I hope that I would take this opportunity to say 4 something about the foam board, the debris and the 5 workers used to clean the debris. Definitely there 6 would be debris, rubbish. It wouldn't be spotlessly 7 clean. I just hope they wouldn't accumulate. If there 8 was less accumulation there would be less of a hazard of 9 fire. I hope they would develop the habit of clearing 10 away the debris every day. 11 And I hope that the Committee will uncover the truth 12 for the hundred or so people who perished. And I hope 13 that those who dodged a bullet to pluck up their courage 14 and soldier on. 15 MR DAWES: Thank you. I've got no further questions. 16 CHAIRMAN: Does any involved party have any questions? 17 I'm sure, Mr Cheng, your plea was heard by so many 18 and thank you very much for being with us. Your 19 evidence is very important. 20 A. I thought it would be useless, because what happened 21 could not be undone. Since there was an invitation, 22 I have to come. My children asked me to think twice. 23 Whether we can do something would depend on you. 24 I wonder if we can uncover the truth. 25 People have perished. I hope that they will rest in</p>	<p>1 opportunity to make representation. However, we will 2 wait to see how they will respond, how they would 3 receive certain tasks, how they will assign certain 4 tasks, how they would put it together. When they 5 receive the task, they would act on the task. 6 The Competition Commission is highly concerned about 7 this matter. We have already retained robust legal 8 team. We've also retained senior counsel to take on 9 this case. 10 If the Competition Commission's evidence 11 is substantiated, this will be the first case under the 12 law that bid-rigging syndicate is brought to trial. 13 They exchanged homework and they also internally decide 14 on the bidder and they're involved in 11 bids. They may 15 not be successful in all the bids, but the amount of 16 money involved is really substantial, totalling 17 \$700 million. 18 Second, I would like to solemnly say that you have 19 probably seen the press release. There is some 20 suspected collusion to defraud that we have also handed 21 over to the law enforcement agency. There is a saying 22 that bid-rigging may be criminal, it's all a matter of 23 being civil. This may be technically correct, but in 24 2010, like I said in our opening statement, the CFA and 25 also the appeal court, Justice Robert Tang and also</p>

Page 57	Page 59
<p>1 Justice Henry Litton said that the bidders should be 2 requested to state clearly that there is no collusion 3 before the bidding. 4 In this case, the -- in 2017 the party added this 5 particular no collusion tendering certificate in the 6 tendering document, this is written into the tendering 7 document, it means the parties inviting tenders should 8 make it clear -- all the bidders should make it clear 9 there is no collusion at the time of bidding. 10 If the bidders try to get the bid through first 11 declaration then, like Justice Robert Tang and Justice 12 Henry Litton said, this would constitute collusion and 13 fraud. So we have referred the case to the law 14 enforcement agency that this is not something that is 15 out of the ordinary and it is common knowledge that one 16 should not get any deal by crook and by hook. 17 Now, in this prosecution, we have not included 18 Will Power and Prestige. In connection with what 19 happened at Wang Fuk Court, our investigation has not 20 been completed. We do not rule out the possibility that 21 there may be two or more bid-rigging syndicates that are 22 at play. We do not rule out the possibility that in 23 this particular bid we will instigate legal proceedings. 24 So please be patient. 25 Chairman, members, in today's hearing and also in</p>	<p>1 It's time for a break. We have heard a lot of life 2 experience. It is not be easy for the witnesses to come 3 forward and testify. You can imagine what happened on 4 that day is really a harrowing experience for them. 5 I must reiterate the plea that I made a couple of 6 days ago. We all understand that we are concerned about 7 this public hearing, but for the witnesses who stepped 8 forward to testify, who have lived through such 9 harrowing experiences, I hope that you would be more 10 sensitive. If they decline interview, please leave them 11 alone. I'm sure a number of witnesses have already made 12 a plea. I think they are sincere. I think we share 13 their sentiments there. 14 I'd like to thank all the witnesses who appeared 15 this morning. Your evidence will be really very 16 important to our investigation. There are a lot of 17 expectations on us. We will get on with our task to the 18 best of our ability. 19 We will be back at 2.15. 20 (12.36 pm) 21 (The luncheon adjournment) 22 (2.15 pm) 23 MR DAWES: Chairman, members, the first witness this 24 afternoon is Mr Yuen Chung Man. 25 Good afternoon, Mr Yuen. Please stand up and read</p>
Page 58	Page 60
<p>1 the legal proceedings and also the potential legislative 2 amendments, there is a clear message that we have 3 reached a turning point. All these bid-rigging 4 syndicates, they may think it is all a matter of being 5 imposed a fine, but this kind of mentality is no longer 6 valid. The rules of the game have already changed. 7 We understand that the counsel is making arrangement 8 for the writ and for the relevant information to be made 9 available to all the relevant parties and I hope that 10 members will get a chance to have a look at this. Once 11 you've digested all the information, if there is 12 anything you would like the CC to contribute, we are 13 only delighted to do so. 14 I have nothing further. Unless I can be of any 15 further assistance. 16 CHAIRMAN: This is only an allegation at this stage. 17 I believe that the law enforcement agencies will follow 18 up on this case and conduct investigation and uncover 19 the truth. This is something that we all look forward 20 to. 21 I think that there will be challenges in terms of 22 investigation, but I'm sure that the law enforcement 23 agencies will get on with these allegations. Although 24 I must say that this remains investigation. We haven't 25 got the result. We should be cautious about this.</p>	<p>1 from the declaration in front of you. 2 MR YUEN CHUNG MAN (affirmed) 3 Examination by MR DAWES 4 CHAIRMAN: Please be seated. 5 MR DAWES: You are a resident of Wang Fuk Court. What's the 6 unit number? 7 A. Wang Tai House 2602. 8 Q. When did you move in? 9 A. I moved into flat 02 in about 2006 or 2007. 10 Q. I understand that your parents live there as well. 11 Where do they live? 12 A. Wang Tai House 2606. 13 Q. You live in Wang Tai House as well? 14 A. Right. 15 Q. How many years have you been living in Wang Fuk Court? 16 A. I lived there since 1990s. 17 Q. You grew up there? 18 A. Yes. 19 Q. I understand that your parents died in the fire. 20 A. Right. 21 Q. Before we look into the issues, I would like to ask what 22 you do for a living. 23 A. I engage in applications for catering establishments. 24 Q. Before the fire, did you notice possible risks and 25 problems in relation to the maintenance work? What were</p>

Page 61	Page 63
<p>1 your observations?</p> <p>2 A. In the staircase I saw that some windows were converted</p> <p>3 into access openings.</p> <p>4 Q. How did you feel when you saw that?</p> <p>5 A. I thought it was problematic.</p> <p>6 Q. Why?</p> <p>7 A. Because the windows were there to stop fire and smoke</p> <p>8 from entering. When the windows were removed, then the</p> <p>9 function was lost.</p> <p>10 Q. Why would you have such an understanding?</p> <p>11 A. Well, I engage in applications for permit in relation to</p> <p>12 catering establishments. We have to get approvals in</p> <p>13 relation to fire services installations.</p> <p>14 Q. Do you get in touch with any other government</p> <p>15 departments in your line of work?</p> <p>16 A. BD and ICU.</p> <p>17 Q. Other than this issue, did you notice any other issues</p> <p>18 in the maintenance?</p> <p>19 A. Windows were covered by foam boards in each flat.</p> <p>20 Q. What was the problem?</p> <p>21 A. First of all, I could not see from the inside to the</p> <p>22 outside; secondly, I did not know whether the materials</p> <p>23 used to cover the window were fireproof.</p> <p>24 Q. Did you or your neighbours raise these with the</p> <p>25 authorities?</p>	<p>1 somehow, when the results were announced, he commanded</p> <p>2 the highest number of votes. We thought that something</p> <p>3 was going on behind the scene that we were not aware of.</p> <p>4 Q. Anything else?</p> <p>5 A. No, nothing.</p> <p>6 MR DAWES: Thank you very much, Mr Yuen.</p> <p>7 CHAIRMAN: Other involved parties, any questions?</p> <p>8 If not, thank you very much, Mr Yuen. Thank you</p> <p>9 very much for all the evidence. Very important.</p> <p>10 (The witness was released)</p> <p>11 MR DAWES: The next witness is Mr Man Ka Chun.</p> <p>12 Mr Man, thank you very much for coming to the</p> <p>13 Committee. There is a declaration in front of you.</p> <p>14 Please rise to your feet and read it out if you will.</p> <p>15 MR MAN KA CHUN (affirmed)</p> <p>16 Examination by MR DAWES</p> <p>17 MR DAWES: Thank you very much, Mr Man.</p> <p>18 Chairman, I talked with Mr Man and he said he'd like</p> <p>19 to read out something to the Committee. That includes</p> <p>20 the information in the form. So, with your permission,</p> <p>21 chairman, I would like to let Mr Man to read out his</p> <p>22 statement.</p> <p>23 CHAIRMAN: Yes, please, Mr Man. Whatever you want to say,</p> <p>24 go ahead, please.</p> <p>25 MR DAWES: When it comes to the information on the form on</p>
Page 62	Page 64
<p>1 A. I didn't myself. I do know some neighbours did do this.</p> <p>2 Q. Let me take you through the fire day. What time did you</p> <p>3 become aware of the fire?</p> <p>4 A. About 3.</p> <p>5 Q. Where were you at the time?</p> <p>6 A. I was in Telford Garden.</p> <p>7 Q. What did you do?</p> <p>8 A. I went back to Tai Po by transport.</p> <p>9 Q. You went back to Tai Po. What was the situation like?</p> <p>10 A. I got off the public transport. There was a huge fire.</p> <p>11 I was looking for my parents nearby. I kept ringing</p> <p>12 them up. No answer, no nothing. I'd been searching for</p> <p>13 a long time in the vicinity, Kwong Fuk Estate Community</p> <p>14 Hall. I walked over there to look for them.</p> <p>15 Q. The access openings, you have some knowledge of that.</p> <p>16 Did you go and see about the openings?</p> <p>17 A. It was made of wood.</p> <p>18 Q. Any observation there?</p> <p>19 A. It was wooden, certainly not fire-retardant. The</p> <p>20 windows are supposed to guard against smoke and fire but</p> <p>21 this is wood.</p> <p>22 Q. Anything else you'd like to say to the Committee?</p> <p>23 A. I'd like to say that at the OC meetings we cast a vote</p> <p>24 on the companies. My observation is that many of the</p> <p>25 neighbours didn't like the one that won the bid, but</p>	<p>1 the screen, is there anything you'd like to add?</p> <p>2 A. The time may not be accurate and I believe that there</p> <p>3 might be some discrepancy there because I didn't have</p> <p>4 the chance to notice the time I was sitting in the room</p> <p>5 at home, in front of my computer desk. The sitting</p> <p>6 room, dining room, kitchen, toilet, all the windows are</p> <p>7 sealed with foam boards and we normally open the windows</p> <p>8 only in a very limited way. There was dust and the</p> <p>9 works going on. If there were dust, if there were</p> <p>10 noise, we would close the door. We would keep the</p> <p>11 windows ajar. We would have to turn on the light all</p> <p>12 the time. We were not aware of what happened outside.</p> <p>13 We're facing Tolo Harbour and there are fire engines</p> <p>14 passing through from time to time and we might think</p> <p>15 there might be traffic accidents. We didn't think</p> <p>16 something wrong happened to our estate.</p> <p>17 Even if you open the window, through the netting you</p> <p>18 can't see clearly what happened outside.</p> <p>19 At that time, I smelled something burning and</p> <p>20 I heard some noise. I didn't know what happened, so</p> <p>21 I picked up my torch and went round and a few seconds</p> <p>22 later I heard a lot of fire engines. My family members</p> <p>23 thought about putting on their slippers and going out to</p> <p>24 find out what happened and I checked all the windows.</p> <p>25 The scaffolding outside the kitchen window, there</p>

Page 65	Page 67
<p>1 was a hole there about the size of a wall clock. There</p> <p>2 might be some discrepancy because of distance. We're</p> <p>3 not sure whether it was burned by the fire or whether</p> <p>4 the hole was there in the netting, but it was there.</p> <p>5 At that time, below the netting, there were a few</p> <p>6 bags of construction materials. They were on fire and</p> <p>7 the fire was spreading. There were embers falling down.</p> <p>8 There were materials placed on the scaffolding. There</p> <p>9 were tiles put there. There were cement put there.</p> <p>10 At that time, I asked my family members to put on</p> <p>11 their slippers and grab their bag to go out and we</p> <p>12 opened the door to notify the neighbors. Our</p> <p>13 information is Wang Kin House, 30th floor, 03. There</p> <p>14 was fire on the scaffolding. We didn't know what</p> <p>15 happened outside at that moment at all. We told the</p> <p>16 neighbors what we saw. Nobody had any time to pick up</p> <p>17 their phone or tune into the TV. We didn't know the</p> <p>18 exact time. We saw some small fire and I tried to douse</p> <p>19 water from the kitchen.</p> <p>20 After a few attempts, there was a bit of a distance</p> <p>21 there, the fire was on the edge of the scaffolding, very</p> <p>22 close to the green netting. We couldn't douse it or put</p> <p>23 it out with water and I poured water downstairs twice</p> <p>24 because we were worried about the fire spreading and I</p> <p>25 asked everybody to leave.</p>	<p>1 every door, but I tried my best at the time. I tried to</p> <p>2 knock on the fire alarm. I didn't have much time to</p> <p>3 think. That was very much a reflex. It all happened in</p> <p>4 a few -- couple of seconds, all in chaos. I didn't have</p> <p>5 time and the ability to get every single household to</p> <p>6 get out. I was trying to notify everybody and nobody</p> <p>7 should be harmed like this.</p> <p>8 There are two types of fire alarms. One is you have</p> <p>9 to smash the glass, second you have to press the button</p> <p>10 for it to go off. When I -- after I left my home,</p> <p>11 I went out with a torch. I didn't know what happened to</p> <p>12 other floors, nor did I know whether there would be any</p> <p>13 power outage. I saw the fire alarm. My first response</p> <p>14 was to smash it with a torch. No time at all to think</p> <p>15 about the kind of fire alarm it was. I really wanted it</p> <p>16 to go off. Any floor I went to I would smash the fire</p> <p>17 alarm and press the button.</p> <p>18 The walls in the staircases were all painted white,</p> <p>19 no floor numbers there. I didn't know what floor I was</p> <p>20 on. Along the staircase some of the windows were taken</p> <p>21 out and the fire doors were functioning are normally, no</p> <p>22 debris, but on certain floors there was white smoke, at</p> <p>23 least two to three floors.</p> <p>24 The windows on the staircases were taken away.</p> <p>25 People my size can even walk out. There was fire</p>
Page 66	Page 68
<p>1 I opened the door, no smoke, so nobody was using wet</p> <p>2 towel. We thought that it was a small fire. We didn't</p> <p>3 see anything at all. We didn't see any smoke or big</p> <p>4 sources of fire.</p> <p>5 In the course of leaving the building, we saw some</p> <p>6 sources of fire. Myself and my family members have left</p> <p>7 and the neighbours left by elevator. We tried to press</p> <p>8 the alarm bell, but no response. I tried to put out the</p> <p>9 fire with the hose reel. I pulled out the hose,</p> <p>10 I turned the switch and then very little water came out.</p> <p>11 It was good enough to wash your hands with but wasn't</p> <p>12 good enough to put out the fire.</p> <p>13 I thought the hose reel was old and entangled.</p> <p>14 I tried to pull and turn the switch but again very</p> <p>15 little water. I decided to evacuate. I was worried</p> <p>16 about the hose getting in the way of evacuation so I put</p> <p>17 the hose back into the reel and tried to see if anyone</p> <p>18 needed help before I went down the stairs.</p> <p>19 I went down the stairs. I checked every single</p> <p>20 floor. I tried to smash the fire alarm, but no</p> <p>21 response.</p> <p>22 I'd like to add that I didn't receive any training</p> <p>23 and I had to evacuate myself and I could not do any</p> <p>24 multitasking.</p> <p>25 When I you walked every floor, I could not knock on</p>	<p>1 burning on the scaffolds. I didn't stop to look at it.</p> <p>2 I looked into the corridor from the fire door and on one</p> <p>3 of the floors where there was less smoke on the</p> <p>4 staircase, I went back to the corridor. There was no</p> <p>5 smoke in the corridor and nothing burning on the</p> <p>6 staircase or the corridor on that floor.</p> <p>7 Here, this is some CCTV footage Wang Kin House. I</p> <p>8 can't quite remember which staircase I walked down on.</p> <p>9 I can't remember what floor it was. Because I thought</p> <p>10 about nothing except to notify people to leave and also</p> <p>11 to evacuate. On the floor there was a woman shouting,</p> <p>12 "Fire!" I walked into her unit. I looked at the</p> <p>13 kitchen. There was a man trying to put out a fire with</p> <p>14 a hose reel. Again he said no water.</p> <p>15 The fire occurred outside that unit's kitchen,</p> <p>16 outside the scaffolding. I didn't see clearly what</p> <p>17 happened. I told them that it was on fire upstairs,</p> <p>18 can't put out, we have it get out. He said there was no</p> <p>19 water. I asked many times where there is the fire</p> <p>20 extinguisher. I asked him to get out and then I walk up</p> <p>21 to the fire alarm, trying to make it go off.</p> <p>22 I saw some people. I had to make sure that the</p> <p>23 means of escape is safe enough so I turned on the torch.</p> <p>24 And then I heard some noises upstairs. I think it was</p> <p>25 something falling. I went up to check but nothing,</p>

Page 69	Page 71
<p>1 nobody there.</p> <p>2 I'd like to make a correction. Because of the sheer</p> <p>3 chaos, I kept walking in circles. I walked from one</p> <p>4 side to another in order to knock on every single door</p> <p>5 and then I walked down the lower floor. There is</p> <p>6 a likelihood that I may get the wrong floor and didn't</p> <p>7 go back to the floor in the footage. I'm not sure</p> <p>8 whether the two elderly people have made it out. And</p> <p>9 then I continued my escape. I was notifying everybody.</p> <p>10 In the lobby, there was a security guard and</p> <p>11 a uniformed policeman. I checked with them briefly and</p> <p>12 there was debris falling down. I told them that --</p> <p>13 I was really emotional at the time. We waited for</p> <p>14 a while. The firefighters indicated it was safe. Then</p> <p>15 I ran out together with another youngster. We stopped</p> <p>16 at the management office. The pathway to the housing</p> <p>17 estate was full of people. It was very crowded, even</p> <p>18 wheelchair-bound people couldn't get through.</p> <p>19 I went to the ambulance or the bus stop near</p> <p>20 Kwong Wang Street. I think it was the ambulance</p> <p>21 station. I contacted my family members to report</p> <p>22 safety. I didn't notice the time at all. It was</p> <p>23 something like 15:40 at the time I reported safety. At</p> <p>24 that time I wasn't trapped, I wasn't injured at all, but</p> <p>25 I know a lot of firefighters had turned up and I didn't</p>	<p>1 The road there can be for loading and unloading of</p> <p>2 their trucks, and so there was a big pile of materials.</p> <p>3 Why I have such recollection is because I usually pass</p> <p>4 that spot when jogging, to get to Yuen Chau Tsai and the</p> <p>5 waterfront.</p> <p>6 Q. Allow us some time to show the plan.</p> <p>7 Can you show us roughly the location?</p> <p>8 A. F is Wang Cheong, G is Wang Shing. At the tip of</p> <p>9 block F there's a pedestrian gate leading to Yuen Chau</p> <p>10 Tsai.</p> <p>11 Q. So that's the suspected start of the fire, the location</p> <p>12 where the fire started.</p> <p>13 A. Yes.</p> <p>14 MR DAWES: Thank you very much.</p> <p>15 Chair, I have no further questions.</p> <p>16 CHAIRMAN: Questions from any involved parties?</p> <p>17 If not, Mr Man, from your evidence, it can be seen</p> <p>18 that you have been flashing back to see whether more</p> <p>19 could have been done. I think everyone here feels that</p> <p>20 you have done your very best. Thank you very much for</p> <p>21 giving us evidence. Very useful to assist our</p> <p>22 understanding of the fire. Thank you. Thank you,</p> <p>23 Mr Man.</p> <p>24 (The witness was released)</p> <p>25 MR DAWES: Chair, we have a juggling of witnesses. The next</p>
Page 70	Page 72
<p>1 think the situation was optimistic. I expected a lot of</p> <p>2 people to be saved. I didn't call 999 because I didn't</p> <p>3 really want to jam the line because there were other</p> <p>4 neighbors who became aware of the fire. They left by</p> <p>5 elevator. I was still inside and I thought that</p> <p>6 they would call the relevant officers.</p> <p>7 Q. Thank you very much. Very comprehensive. I know that</p> <p>8 you were there on the first day of hearing. There was</p> <p>9 footage on the 21st floor at Wang Kin Court. There was</p> <p>10 an attempt to activate the alarm. It was 3.23.</p> <p>11 What time do you think you discovered the fire?</p> <p>12 A. 15:05 to 15:10. Normally I would be working out.</p> <p>13 I finished the workout, I was changing and trying to go</p> <p>14 out. I think it was around that time.</p> <p>15 Q. Lastly, is there anything more you'd like to add or say</p> <p>16 to the Committee?</p> <p>17 A. I'd like to add in a piece of information. Wang Cheong</p> <p>18 House and Wang Shing House, at the back of the two</p> <p>19 buildings, there is a pedestrian gate leading to Yuen</p> <p>20 Chau Tsai or Tai Wong Yeh Temple, and then a large pile</p> <p>21 of construction materials were placed there. On that</p> <p>22 day or a week before, I don't really know, there were</p> <p>23 piles of construction materials there. It used to be</p> <p>24 benches for the elderly. Instead, they placed large</p> <p>25 quantities of construction materials there.</p>	<p>1 is Ms Wong Shuk Lan.</p> <p>2 Madam Wong, good afternoon. Can you rise and read</p> <p>3 the declaration in front of you.</p> <p>4 MADAM WONG SHUK LAN (affirmed)</p> <p>5 Examination by MR DAWES</p> <p>6 MR DAWES: Thank you, Ms Wong. Please be seated.</p> <p>7 Madam Wong, information shows that you live in</p> <p>8 Wang Chi 403, with what family members?</p> <p>9 A. With my son.</p> <p>10 Q. Can you tell us where you work?</p> <p>11 A. I work in Tai Po Market, to take over from my mother who</p> <p>12 has passed away. She was the old licensee so she told</p> <p>13 me to take over so I've been working at the market</p> <p>14 since.</p> <p>15 Q. So you have frequent opportunities to meet with fellow</p> <p>16 residents in the market?</p> <p>17 A. Yes. I started working in the market when the old</p> <p>18 market was relocated to the new. I have been working</p> <p>19 there, so many fellow residents know me.</p> <p>20 Q. How long have you lived in Wang Fuk Court?</p> <p>21 A. After I graduated from university, because of the</p> <p>22 Well-off Tenants Policy asking us to pay triple rent, we</p> <p>23 purchased Wang Fuk Court. It's been more than two</p> <p>24 decades. So it was a few years after I joined the</p> <p>25 market and then I think it's about -- I'm now 51, so</p>

Page 73

1 it's 20-odd years.

2 Q. Now, you live on the 4th floor. Sometimes you use the

3 stairs, right, and you have the opportunity to open the

4 smoke doors and also the doors leading to the lobby or

5 the rear staircase. Can you tell us whether there were

6 occasions when the doors were locked or any

7 abnormalities?

8 A. To the right of my unit, 403, is the door leading to the

9 rear staircase. If the lift has broken down or if I am

10 in a hurry, I will use the stairs. Because I'm in

11 a rush, I will very often use the rear staircase.

12 I have never been able to open the door. Every time

13 I try to push it open, the door, there should be an

14 alarm, but the alarm never went off, I never succeeded

15 in opening the door. It was only on one occasion that

16 a cleaning lady with a rural dialect was outside and

17 then she opened the door for me.

18 Q. So, in other words, when the door is opened there should

19 be an alarm but the alarm has never gone off and you

20 have never succeeded in opening that door?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. According to your statement, you have taken part in

23 meetings of IO. But sometimes you failed to join. Can

24 you tell us why?

25 A. Because I am not the landlord. The flat was registered

Page 74

1 under my younger brother's name but we live together in

2 the family. My younger brother has to look after my

3 father and he lives in Lam Tsuen. He's not here. So if

4 he is not around, he cannot attend IO meeting. He is

5 the owner. And then I have to produce my ID number in

6 order to attend a meeting. Well, it is my personal

7 data, I don't feel safe living in Wang Fuk. Whenever we

8 say anything or if we not do as wished, we will be

9 scolded by the security guard. Anyway, the attitude is

10 very bad. I don't want my personal data to be leaked.

11 Q. You mentioned you heard of fellow residents who have had

12 their proxy instrument taken from them or there were

13 people who did not authorise any proxies but they were

14 represented at meetings. Can you tell us more?

15 A. I work at the market. Many fellow residents like to

16 chat with me while shopping. Some told me that some

17 volunteers of Wong Pik Kiu sought proxy instruments from

18 them. Many elderly would just do as requested or

19 sometimes they would tell their younger members of the

20 family at night. But the situation was quite chaos.

21 I have witnessed conflict between Wong Pik Kiu and our

22 residents on renovation matters.

23 Because I had to attend work, I seldom got involved.

24 And talk of false proxies, that is the owner has never

25 sent proxy, but when the owner went to vote on his own,

Page 75

1 he found out that somebody has already voted using his

2 identity.

3 Q. So this is just hearsay; you have not witnessed

4 anything?

5 A. Yes, I heard from people at the market.

6 Q. Have you got further things to say to the Committee?

7 A. From the tendering to the fire, I think things are very

8 suspicious. We have objected to a lot of things because

9 the price is too high and we have been interfered by

10 many people. Many fellow residents are aware of my

11 situation. Many of them are from other places. They

12 told me that so many lives were lost in this fire, but

13 then that saved their housing. It's so hard to hear.

14 Eightland Gardens, Tai Po, the renovation project can

15 cost \$300,000 per household and DAB is involved.

16 I don't know why.

17 Since our incident, they are now more vigilant and

18 they will discuss and come up with more tactics to

19 tackle. And the police and ICAC have arrested some

20 people. And they feel a bit safer now for the time

21 being.

22 MR DAWES: Thank you. I have no further questions.

23 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Madam Wong, for giving evidence.

24 (The witness was released)

25 CHAIRMAN: Now may I remind the Committee that for the

Page 76

1 second part of our terms of reference, that is about

2 bid-rigging and malpractices, we will start our public

3 consultation very soon.

4 For the public, if you have any information or

5 evidence to assist the Committee in this investigation,

6 please provide us with such documents. While we know

7 that the time is short, I ask for your understanding

8 because we have an urgency in carrying out our work. So

9 if you have any information that can assist our

10 investigation with regard to bid-rigging and

11 malpractices, please respond to the notice issued by our

12 Secretariat and submit the information following the

13 timeline. Thank you.

14 Next we have Mr SW Lee to take evidence from

15 witnesses.

16 MR SW LEE: Next we have Madam Huang Zulian, a cleaning

17 worker of Wang Fuk Court where the fire happened.

18 Madam Huang, before we look into the incident, in

19 front of you there is a card. Can you read it out,

20 please.

21 MS HUANG ZULIAN (affirmed)

22 Examination by MR SW LEE

23 Q. Please be seated. Madam Huang, on the day of the fire

24 of Wang Fuk Court, you were working there?

25 A. Yes.

Page 77	Page 79
<p>1 Q. You were working on the scaffolding of Wang Cheong 2 House? 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. After the fire broke out, you could not escape from the 5 fire service. It was only on the next day, on 6 27 November, that you were rescued by firefighters on 7 the rooftop? 8 A. Yes. 9 Q. I'm going to ask you about your work and also about the 10 fire. However, I'd like to assist the chairman and 11 members to understand the background a little bit more. 12 In around 2013-2014, you joined the construction 13 industry as a cleaning worker for the facade of 14 buildings. So you were there to wash the facade of the 15 building. So by 2025 you were already in this industry 16 for 11 years or 12 years? 17 A. Yes. 18 Q. For Wang Fuk Court, fellow worker Yau Gor, Yiu Shun Yau, 19 referred you to the job to assist; right? 20 A. Yes. 21 Q. So you were a casual worker on daily wages basis? 22 A. Yes. 23 Q. You were paid on daily wages. After the incident you 24 provided a police statement. I will not test your 25 memory. I will just confirm what's in your statement.</p>	<p>1 A. Yes. 2 Q. Apart from meeting Mr Lai when you start and finish the 3 day, have you met him elsewhere? 4 A. Only once. He would tell us where to start and what to 5 work on. 6 Q. At the beginning of the day? 7 A. No. I've only met him once. 8 Q. So when you were on the scaffolding you would not see 9 him patrolling and check on whether you are diligent? 10 A. No. 11 Q. So the access opening, did Mr Lai tell you what is its 12 purpose? 13 A. The access opening, he did talk about that, but usually 14 we start from the top. We rarely go through the access 15 opening. 16 Q. Yes. You explained to the police that you needed water 17 supply, you started from the roof to the scaffolding. 18 But when it comes to the access opening, did Mr Lai tell 19 you what's the purpose? 20 A. He did not, but he did mention a bit what was the use of 21 the access opening. He said going in and out. 22 Q. At the safety briefing did he talk about fire safety 23 installations and what to do when there was a fire? 24 A. At the safety briefing he gave us information on safety 25 gear, like the safety harness, the helmet and to take</p>
Page 78	Page 80
<p>1 If there is anything incorrect, do let us know. 2 A. Okay. 3 Q. Now, you told us you started working at Wang Fuk Court 4 on 14 November. 5 A. Yes. 6 Q. On the 14th and the 15th you mainly took part in safety 7 briefings for a couple of hours; right? 8 A. Yes, for one hour. 9 Q. When it comes to safety measures, do you recall what you 10 were told at this safety briefing? 11 A. We had to wear safety belts, helmets when we go out to 12 work. 13 Q. Go out to work, when you go to the scaffolding? 14 A. Yes, go out to work on scaffolding. 15 Q. Did they tell you in detail that there would be an exit 16 every few floors for you to go in and out the access? 17 A. Not at the safety briefing. The access opening was not 18 mentioned. But Mr Lai. 19 Q. Mr Lai is a foreman, right? 20 A. Yes. 21 Q. You don't know his full name? 22 A. I don't. 23 Q. You told the police that Mr Lai would ensure that you 24 clock in and clock out for work to make sure you are 25 punctual throughout the day.</p>	<p>1 care of safety, et cetera. 2 Q. Did he say how you should respond when scaffolding was 3 on fire? 4 A. No. He just told us no smoking and not to do unhygienic 5 things on scaffolding. 6 Q. On smoking, he said no smoking. I know you and Yau Gor 7 are non-smokers. Was there any elaboration where 8 you should go if you wanted to smoke? 9 A. No. We told them that we did not smoke, so that was not 10 elaborated. 11 Q. When it comes to the safety briefing, were there anyone 12 else in addition to you and Yau Gor? 13 A. Just the two of us. 14 Q. There is another issue relating to safety. I understand 15 that when you wash the external wall, you need to use 16 some kind of cleaning solvent. 17 A. Yes. And water. The cleaning solvent will have to be 18 diluted with water before use. 19 Q. You are very experienced. Do you know what is the 20 ingredients of the wash solvent? 21 A. Some kind of acid. The solvent has to be diluted so 22 that it will be thin enough to be used. 23 Q. According to Yau Gor, the ratio is usually 7 to 3. 24 A. Thin enough to use. If it's too thin, you won't be able 25 to use it. If it's too thick, you won't be able to use</p>

Page 81	Page 83
<p>1 it either. So it has to be right.</p> <p>2 Q. The solvent is corrosive, is that right, because it has</p> <p>3 this quality to remove stains?</p> <p>4 A. Yes. Concrete. Bits of concrete.</p> <p>5 Q. When it comes to your work, that is washing the external</p> <p>6 tiles, when you conducted the work there would not be</p> <p>7 any workers working anywhere in the areas where you were</p> <p>8 at the scaffolding; right?</p> <p>9 A. Right.</p> <p>10 Q. According to you, on the 14th and 15th, you were</p> <p>11 transporting your supplies as well as attending to the</p> <p>12 safety briefing?</p> <p>13 A. Yes, right. Moving my equipment.</p> <p>14 Q. On the 16th, it's a Sunday, you didn't have to work. So</p> <p>15 you started working on the first day at Wang Cheong</p> <p>16 House on the 17th, that is to wash the external wall; is</p> <p>17 that right?</p> <p>18 A. Yes.</p> <p>19 Q. I understand that you have marked the plan for the</p> <p>20 police. Now, I show you the plan. Before you are shown</p> <p>21 the plan, let me ask you, Wang Cheong House I suppose</p> <p>22 was the first block you started to work on?</p> <p>23 A. Right, block 6.</p> <p>24 Q. You see that there is a unit number in each block.</p> <p>25 There's 1, and then you mark a triangle. And next to 2</p>	<p>1 unit 3, the foam boards had already been removed?</p> <p>2 A. Right.</p> <p>3 Q. As we've mentioned, when you were washing the external</p> <p>4 wall, there would only be you and Yau Gor?</p> <p>5 A. Right.</p> <p>6 Q. But our understanding is that on the scaffolding there</p> <p>7 were other workers. Do you recall that there were</p> <p>8 workers at other parts on the scaffolding on that day?</p> <p>9 A. When we started our work that morning we were on the</p> <p>10 rooftop. At about 12 to 1 o'clock we were still on the</p> <p>11 rooftop.</p> <p>12 Q. You mean the top floor on the rooftop?</p> <p>13 A. Right. We did not go anywhere.</p> <p>14 Q. Did you know if there were any workers on the</p> <p>15 scaffolding, not outside unit 3 but other areas?</p> <p>16 A. I had no idea.</p> <p>17 Q. Close to the time when the fire started, that is around</p> <p>18 2.30, workers discovered a fire.</p> <p>19 A. We did not know. We heard the people shouting "fire"</p> <p>20 from the ground floor. We looked. We realised that</p> <p>21 we could not escape, so we climbed up.</p> <p>22 Q. According to what you said to the police, you said, in</p> <p>23 addition to hearing someone shouting "fire", you also</p> <p>24 smelled burning plastic.</p> <p>25 A. Right, a mild smell.</p>
Page 82	Page 84
<p>1 you also put down a triangle. And then turning to the</p> <p>2 left, in between units 2 and 3 on the external wall,</p> <p>3 outside the light well, you have done the external</p> <p>4 washing work?</p> <p>5 A. Right.</p> <p>6 Q. So by 26 November, my understanding is that you were</p> <p>7 going to work on the two facades outside unit 3; is that</p> <p>8 right?</p> <p>9 A. Right.</p> <p>10 Q. Our understanding of this plan is that you used the</p> <p>11 stars to indicate the two facades that you were going to</p> <p>12 work on on that day?</p> <p>13 A. Right.</p> <p>14 Q. My understanding is that when it comes to the washing of</p> <p>15 tiles, it's actually the last step of the maintenance</p> <p>16 work.</p> <p>17 A. Right.</p> <p>18 Q. So by the time you embarked on your work, there would</p> <p>19 not be any foam board covering the windows?</p> <p>20 A. Right.</p> <p>21 Q. In between units 2 and 3 there is an area that is called</p> <p>22 a light well. From your recollection, when you were</p> <p>23 doing your work, there were no foam boards there?</p> <p>24 A. Correct.</p> <p>25 Q. On the morning of the 26th when you were working on</p>	<p>1 Q. So on this plan you will be on the scaffolding, working</p> <p>2 somewhere between units 3 and 4?</p> <p>3 A. Yes. Not yet to 4, right.</p> <p>4 Q. You said when you heard someone shouting "fire", you</p> <p>5 went to the location that is circled here to try to find</p> <p>6 out what happened?</p> <p>7 A. Yes. I saw some smoke. I realised I could not go any</p> <p>8 further.</p> <p>9 Q. So you reached the corner where it's circled here, you</p> <p>10 tried to go past that location but you could not?</p> <p>11 A. Right.</p> <p>12 Q. Apart from smoke, did you see any fire?</p> <p>13 A. Not yet. Not yet. I saw some smoke from that location.</p> <p>14 Q. Can you remember, was it around the 27th floor when you</p> <p>15 were with Yau Gor?</p> <p>16 A. Yeah, around there.</p> <p>17 Q. Did you tell Yau Gor that there was a fire?</p> <p>18 A. I realised that there was heavy smoke. I suggested</p> <p>19 climbing up along the scaffolding, so we did. We tried</p> <p>20 to get to the rooftop.</p> <p>21 Q. The very top rooftop?</p> <p>22 A. Yeah, right.</p> <p>23 Q. Did you plan to leave Wang Cheong House from the</p> <p>24 rooftop?</p> <p>25 A. We were trying to escape but we saw that there was heavy</p>

Page 85	<p>1 smoke in the rear staircase and we couldn't leave.</p> <p>2 Q. By "rear staircase", you mean the one from the rooftop</p> <p>3 or you have actually entered the staircase?</p> <p>4 A. We opened the door, there was heavy smoke, we could not</p> <p>5 go in.</p> <p>6 Q. So you opened the door on the rooftop and realised there</p> <p>7 was heavy smoke and you realised you could not escape?</p> <p>8 A. Right.</p> <p>9 Q. What did you do?</p> <p>10 A. I realised we couldn't escape. We got some water to put</p> <p>11 out fire on the rooftop wherever we saw them.</p> <p>12 Q. Anyone else there?</p> <p>13 A. No, just me and Yau Gor, just the two of us trying to</p> <p>14 use the hose.</p> <p>15 Q. You and Yau Gor spent the night there waiting to be</p> <p>16 rescued and you were rescued the next morning.</p> <p>17 Now I move on to some general issues to see if you</p> <p>18 can help us. What the Committee would like to do is to</p> <p>19 find out what happened on that day.</p> <p>20 You talked about safety briefing. You were told</p> <p>21 about what you should be mindful about in your line of</p> <p>22 work. Your working hours were 9 to 5?</p> <p>23 A. Right.</p> <p>24 Q. Was there a meal break?</p> <p>25 A. We brought our own lunch and had it on the rooftop.</p>	Page 87	<p>1 CHAIRMAN: Questions from other involved parties?</p> <p>2 If not, Ms Huang, thank you for coming to give</p> <p>3 evidence today. Thank you very much.</p> <p>4 (The witness was released)</p> <p>5 CHAIRMAN: How many witnesses are there?</p> <p>6 MR SW LEE: Two.</p> <p>7 CHAIRMAN: Would you like to take a break now?</p> <p>8 MR SW LEE: This will be a good time.</p> <p>9 CHAIRMAN: Let's take a break of 10 minutes.</p> <p>10 (3.12 pm)</p> <p>11 (A short adjournment)</p> <p>12 (3.22 pm)</p> <p>13 MR SW LEE: Chairman, the next witness is Mr Yiu Shun Yau.</p> <p>14 Mr Yiu, please rise. We have someone to guide you</p> <p>15 sentence by sentence.</p> <p>16 MR YIU SHUN YAU (affirmed)</p> <p>17 Examination by MR SW LEE</p> <p>18 CHAIRMAN: Please be seated, Mr Yiu. You are here to give</p> <p>19 evidence and the declaration requires you to testify</p> <p>20 honestly.</p> <p>21 MR SW LEE: Mr Yiu, on 26 November you and your colleague,</p> <p>22 Ah Lian, that's Huang Zulian who testified just now, you</p> <p>23 two were washing the facade on the scaffold?</p> <p>24 A. Yes.</p> <p>25 Q. We understand that when the fire broke out you were</p>
Page 86	<p>1 Q. Apart from the two of you, did other workers use the</p> <p>2 rooftop to rest or eat there very often?</p> <p>3 A. There was no need for them to go up there unless for</p> <p>4 their work. We needed to go to the rooftop because we</p> <p>5 needed to get water.</p> <p>6 Q. What time was your lunch break?</p> <p>7 A. It's not fixed. Sometimes we finish part of our work</p> <p>8 and it would be around 11 o'clock and we could eat and</p> <p>9 take a rest.</p> <p>10 Q. What about afternoon tea break?</p> <p>11 A. No.</p> <p>12 Q. As far as you know, did other workers follow the same</p> <p>13 pattern, same work pattern?</p> <p>14 A. Yes. Around 9 o'clock they would go up to the</p> <p>15 scaffolding to start their work and they would have</p> <p>16 their own break time and meal time.</p> <p>17 Q. From the 14th to the 26th, in less than two weeks, when</p> <p>18 you worked at Wang Fuk Court, did you see workers</p> <p>19 smoking in the area of Wang Fuk Court?</p> <p>20 A. No. We went straight up. We just said "Hello, good</p> <p>21 morning" to people we saw. We didn't know who they</p> <p>22 were.</p> <p>23 Q. But you saw Lai, the foreman, once?</p> <p>24 A. Right.</p> <p>25 MR SW LEE: I don't have any other questions.</p>	Page 88	<p>1 stuck on the rooftop until the 27th before being</p> <p>2 rescued?</p> <p>3 A. Yes.</p> <p>4 Q. I understand that was not a pleasant experience at all.</p> <p>5 I would like to find out about your course of work, what</p> <p>6 happened during the course of work and also during the</p> <p>7 fire and that would help us understand the situation and</p> <p>8 get to the bottom of the case.</p> <p>9 So thank you very much for being with us today to</p> <p>10 testify.</p> <p>11 For chairman and members to understand more, Mr Yiu,</p> <p>12 in 1995 you joined the trade to become the master to</p> <p>13 clean the facade?</p> <p>14 A. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. So on the day of the fire you've been working in this</p> <p>16 post for more than 30 years. I understand that in 2020</p> <p>17 you were hired by this company Hoi Tak Construction</p> <p>18 Engineering to become the facade cleaner.</p> <p>19 A. Yes.</p> <p>20 Q. Now, about this Hoi Tak Construction Engineering Ltd.</p> <p>21 One of your bosses is Bald Kee.</p> <p>22 A. Yes.</p> <p>23 Q. That is be Mr Lim Chor Kee, nicknamed Bald Kee?</p> <p>24 A. Yes.</p> <p>25 Q. In your company there is another one who is the foreman,</p>

Page 89	Page 91
<p>1 Mr Lai, Boss Lai. Did you hear, other than Hoi Tak 2 Construction, there is a sub-sub-contractor called Guang 3 Pang Engineering Company? 4 A. Never heard of that. 5 Q. Have you heard of someone Bespectacled Kwan? 6 A. No, I haven't. 7 Q. We're going to go back to the 26th but before we talk 8 about that, from Ms Huang Zulian we understand that on 9 the 14th or the 15th, you together with Ms Huang started 10 working in Wang Fuk Court? 11 A. Yes, I remember that. 12 Q. At the very beginning you had a safety class and then 13 you moved the tools? 14 A. Yes. 15 Q. In this safety class do you remember being told anything 16 about the outbreak of fire? 17 A. No. 18 Q. What about smoking? Anything on smoking? 19 A. No, not much. They were talking about the safety 20 measures. 21 Q. Like the safety harness on the scaffold and so on? 22 A. Yes. 23 Q. What about the access openings? 24 A. No. 25 Q. When you work there, did you notice that on certain</p>	<p>1 notice anything. 2 Q. And you didn't have any contact with other workers? 3 A. No, hardly ever. 4 Q. I'm sure you agree that in Wang Fuk Court and Wang 5 Cheong House there must be more than you two workers? 6 A. Yes, we were responsible for cleaning the facade. We 7 didn't see anybody else. 8 Q. You didn't see anybody else? 9 A. We didn't see any other workers. We didn't get in touch 10 with anybody. We're responsible for cleaning the 11 facade. I don't have any other job. 12 Q. Let's take it a step at a time. We have to ascertain 13 this. You saw some other workers. 14 A. Yes. 15 Q. Agreed? Is that right? Although you didn't get in 16 touch with them? 17 A. No contact. 18 Q. Is that correct; is it fair to say? 19 A. Yes. 20 Q. When you worked until the afternoon, when you started 21 hearing someone shouting "fire", you didn't go there to 22 have a look for yourself? 23 A. No. We didn't see anything. We heard someone down 24 there shouting "fire", there was some burning smell. We 25 suspected there was a fire. We dropped the pipe and</p>
Page 90	Page 92
<p>1 floors there are access openings? 2 A. No, I didn't notice that. We take the lift and go to 3 the rooftop and then go down to the ground floor. 4 Q. Starting from the 17th, from your statement to the 5 police, on the 17th or starting from the 17th you 6 started the facade cleaning work on Wang Cheong House? 7 A. Yes. 8 Q. To facilitate the comprehension, I am going to show you 9 a drawing here. This is what you supplied to the 10 police. 11 A. Yes. 12 Q. So you started with unit 1 and then unit 2, and then on 13 the 26th you were up to unit 3, the facade outside 14 unit 3? 15 A. Yes. 16 Q. In these units, when you cleaned the facade, did you 17 notice that on the scaffolding there were other workers? 18 A. No. All day long we would be dousing the facade with 19 a pipe. Nobody can get anywhere near. 20 Q. Nobody got near where you were. 21 A. Yes. 22 Q. But did you see in Wang Cheong House any other workers? 23 A. No. 24 Q. You didn't see? 25 A. When we were working, we cleaned the facade. We didn't</p>	<p>1 climbed up. 2 Q. Was it the 27th floor you were on at that time? 3 A. Yes. 4 Q. And then you climbed up the scaffolding all the way to 5 the rooftop? 6 A. Yes. 7 Q. On the rooftop did you try to make an escape out of Wang 8 Cheong House? 9 A. We couldn't. 10 Q. Why not? 11 A. Because when we opened the fire door, the smoke was 12 spilling out. 13 Q. That's on the rooftop; right? 14 A. Yes. We had to get down from the rooftop. We couldn't 15 escape. 16 Q. So you tried to get back into the building from the 17 rooftop; you couldn't? 18 A. No, we couldn't. It was covered with smoke everywhere. 19 Q. In the safety class, were you told anything about fire 20 evacuation? 21 A. Yes, they talked about assembling in a certain spot in 22 case of fire, but we couldn't escape. 23 Q. Were you told what sort of fire equipment to put out 24 a fire? 25 A. No, no. We didn't have the equipment. We tried to pour</p>

Page 93	Page 95
<p>1 water on the rooftop. 2 Q. Any fire extinguisher on the rooftop? 3 A. No. I didn't see any. 4 MR SW LEE: Chairman, I've got nothing further. 5 CHAIRMAN: Other involved parties, any questions? 6 If not, Mr Yiu, thank you very much. 7 WITNESS: Just to add, both of us had the same questions. 8 If we work in pairs, we go up and down in pairs. 9 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you. 10 (The witness was released) 11 MR DAWES: Chairman, the last witness is Ms Lo Hiu Kei. 12 Ms Lo, please rise to your feet and read out the 13 declaration. 14 MS LO HIU KEI (affirmed) 15 Examination by MR DAWES 16 Q. Please be seated, Madam Lo. 17 Ms Lo, according to the information, your mother and 18 brother live in Wang Cheong House. In this fire your 19 mother perished. 20 A. Yes. 21 Q. To assist the Committee you have prepared a detailed 22 statement. Perhaps we can show this on the screen. 23 Other than the personal data, you have stated your 24 story. Let me say this. 25 At 3.02 you became aware from the group chat that</p>	<p>1 panicked and she told me that there were flames 2 everywhere. 3 Q. And you recorded, paragraph 10, what your mum told you. 4 A. Yes. I told her, "You should get a damp towel to cover 5 your nose and your mouth". She couldn't escape. And 6 I told her to cover her mouth and nose with a wet towel 7 and I told her to stay and wait for rescue. I'm not 8 sure that was right or not. And mum told me to live 9 well. I said I'm coming back and then we hung up. 10 Q. You had a conversation with your mum and you relayed the 11 situation. The time is more important. You were aware 12 of the time because it is recorded on the phone. It was 13 verified. So from what you said, at that time, the 14 smoke invaded the flat? 15 A. Yes. 16 Q. In the course you spent five minutes on the phone with 17 mum and you didn't hear any fire alarm? 18 A. No, I didn't. 19 Q. Thereafter, what time did you arrive at Wang Cheong 20 House? 21 A. After I hung up, I was in Kwun Tong and I caught a cab 22 to Wang Cheong. I was really desperate, so I caught 23 a cab and got off at the gas station. Of course 24 I couldn't go anywhere else further. I took some 25 pictures. As I remember, it was 3.30 at the time when</p>
Page 94	Page 96
<p>1 Wang Cheong House caught fire? 2 A. Yes. 3 Q. When you learned about this, what did you do? 4 A. My brother, myself and my mother sent the information in 5 the group to say that there was a fire and my brother 6 asked where, and my mother said "home", and then I rang 7 up my mum. 8 Q. Paragraph 9, you described the situation. You got 9 through to your mother? 10 A. Yes, I did. 11 Q. Can you repeat the conversation, please? 12 A. At that time I asked her what happened, where was the 13 fire. Mum was really frightened. She said she opened 14 the door and there was really huge smoke. I told her to 15 fill the gap under the door and she was conscious at the 16 time and she could fill the gap at the bottom but not up 17 there. I assume that the fire, the smoke was spilling 18 in from the upper gap. I told her to stay calm because 19 if she panicked she couldn't do anything at all. So 20 I calmed her down and I told her to find out where the 21 fire was coming from. I'm sure she did check. I asked 22 whether it was the kitchen or whether it was the dining 23 room, because there were windows on a few sides and 24 there are windows facing different directions. I tried 25 to ask her where the fire was coming from and she</p>	<p>1 I got out of the taxi. There were flames floating 2 across from Wang Fuk Court. So the burning was really 3 very bad. 4 Q. Another question is, during renovation of the 5 development, did you ever discuss fire risk or did you 6 make any complaints? 7 A. Not any formal complaint, but back then we felt that the 8 whole building was sealed with foam board and the green 9 protective nets. The windows couldn't be opened and 10 then at first there was a lot of dust and smoke, air 11 quality was really bad and we felt depressed. And then 12 we didn't want to stay home. 13 Q. Thank you. Apart from your statement and what you told 14 us just now, is there anything that you would take this 15 opportunity to say to the Committee? 16 A. Chair and members of the Committee, first off, I am 17 grateful for this investigation. I am bereaved. I want 18 to find out the truth. I only had a few minutes of 19 conversation with my mum and then the fire/smoke got so 20 serious. What was the cause? There was no fire alarm, 21 there was no water in the water tank, making it so 22 difficult to put out the fire. A number of factors 23 caused the big fire. Even one life lost is one too 24 many, but we're talking about 160-odd this time. Do we 25 need 160-odd lives to give a wake-up call to Hong Kong?</p>

Page 97

1 This is too big a price.
 2 Before I came to this inquiry, I applied to be one
 3 of the involved parties because I really wanted to find
 4 out the truth. I had little hope for the Committee
 5 because I didn't know how serious the Committee was, but
 6 I have been here since Day 1. I can feel that you take
 7 this matter seriously. I truly believe that the
 8 Committee has the ability to dig to the very truth of
 9 the matter. If there is any legal loophole, it has to
 10 be plugged because we don't want another Wang Fuk Court
 11 to be sacrificed. We have to find out the cause and we
 12 must plug the loopholes and find out who caused this
 13 fire, whether they should be held accountable.
 14 On the day of the fire, people came out to
 15 criticise, they feel they could have done more. So for
 16 government departments and contractors and involved
 17 parties, shouldn't they even more be held accountable?
 18 So please, do justice to all the victims and also all
 19 the more than 1,800 of people affected by the fire.
 20 CHAIRMAN: Anything from involved parties?
 21 Examination by MR TAM
 22 MR TAM: I've only got one more question to ask. May
 23 I refer you to paragraph 16. You said that you
 24 confirmed that what your mum said was true because you
 25 called her ...

Page 98

1 The last time, when was the last time you visited
 2 flat 808?
 3 A. 19 November.
 4 MR TAM: Thank you.
 5 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms Lo, for your evidence. We saw your
 6 interviews on social media. We feel very sorry for your
 7 loss. Take care, and the only thing we can do is to do
 8 justice to the whole thing and then conduct
 9 a comprehensive and fair investigation. We will do our
 10 very best, rest assured. Thank you.
 11 (The witness was released)
 12 MR DAWES: Chairman, we are done with all the witnesses
 13 arranged for today.
 14 CHAIRMAN: So the next time we meet is Monday. We will have
 15 more residents from Wang Fuk Court to give testimony.
 16 MR DAWES: Yes, and also some other parties, we will start
 17 again in the same afternoon. We are on track right now.
 18 CHAIRMAN: Before we end, I will make the same appeal. We
 19 see that friends of the media have been very
 20 cooperative. We thank you for your understanding and
 21 cooperation. But allow me to labour on this point
 22 again. Please respect all residents who are here to
 23 give evidence. If they would like to take interviews,
 24 all the best. If not, please understand.
 25 The hearing for today ends until Monday, 10 am.

Page 99

1 Thank you.
 2 (3.45 pm)
 3 (The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am
 4 on Monday, 30 March 2026)
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 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

Page 100

1 INDEX PAGE
 2
 3
 4 MS NG OI SEE, ELSIE (affirmed) 1
 5 Examination by MR DAWES 1
 6 (The witness was released) 6
 7 MS WONG KA YUEN (affirmed) 6
 8 Examination by MR DAWES 6
 9 (The witness was released) 13
 10 MS SIN SIN HING (affirmed) 14
 11 Examination by MR DAWES 14
 12 (The witness was released) 26
 13 MR CHAN CHUEN, JOE (affirmed) 26
 14 Examination by MR DAWES 26
 15 (The witness was released) 33
 16 MR CHEUNG CHI LIM, GEORGE (affirmed) 33
 17 Examination by MR DAWES 33
 18 Examination by MR TAM 47
 19 (The witness was released) 48
 20 MR CHENG KING HEI (affirmed) 48
 21 Examination by MR DAWES 48
 22 (The witness was released) 55
 23 Submissions by MR LESTER LEE 55
 24 MR YUEN CHUNG MAN (affirmed) 60
 25 Examination by MR DAWES 60
 26 (The witness was released) 63

1 MR MAN KA CHUN (affirmed) 63
2
3 Examination by MR DAWES 63
4
5 (The witness was released) 71
6
7 MADAM WONG SHUK LAN (affirmed) 72
8
9 Examination by MR DAWES 72
10
11 (The witness was released) 75
12
13 MS HUANG ZULIAN (affirmed) 76
14
15 Examination by MR SW LEE 76
16
17 (The witness was released) 87
18
19 MR YIU SHUN YAU (affirmed) 87
20
21 Examination by MR SW LEE 87
22
23 (The witness was released) 93
24
25 MS LO HIU KEI (affirmed) 93
26
27 Examination by MR DAWES 93
28
29 Examination by MR TAM 97
30
31 (The witness was released) 98
32
33
34
35