

STH's transcript of remarks

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Following is the English portion of the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council Building today (May 18):

Reporter: Do you expect that any of the future railway projects to be affected by the court case? If it is, how will the government respond?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: In fact the most imminent of course is the Shatin to Central Link, of which originally the MTR Corporation has already submitted the environmental impact assessment reports. Because of the court case, they have retracted the study reports. At this stage, the most important thing is to find out clearly from the regulator, which is the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), what the judgement entails in terms of the additional steps or the additional information that is required, so that we can be able to meet requirements, for example, maybe we have to provide additional information in a new format in the environmental impact assessment report. So until we find out from the EPD what the new requirements are, we are unable to access the extent to which the Shatin to Central Link will be affected. That said, of course there are other projects which are in the same status, that is, they are in the middle of the EIA study process, under my portfolio, e.g. the road projects, we are in the same processes in finding out clearly what the new requirements are.

Reporter: So there will be a delay?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: It depends on how complex the sort of redoing amounts to. At this stage of time, for the Shatin to Central Link, the original timing was to complete the EIA report submission as well as obtaining the approval from the EPD by early 2012, in fact we do not have a lot of time to put together new information. We have from now until the end of the year to do that, if the requirements are complex, of course we cannot finish within these 6 months, so there may be a delay, but we cannot say until we find out from the EPD clearly what the new requirements are.

Reporter: EPD has no timetable as to when they will get back to you?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: We are already in the process of discussion but it is not as if we missed one step which is already in the technical memorandum. As I explained in the LegCo just now, this requirement is not clearly spelt out in the technical memorandum, so we are now trying to find out, so to speak, what the new syllabuses are before we can take the exam.

Reporter: To avoid the repetition of the same thing in the future, does the EPD review any policy, procedures or even legislation?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I think this is more an environmental protection area. To us, we are project proponent, it is important we comply fully with the law, the technical memorandum as well as the study brief approved, that is what we have done so far. But in the light of the judgement, of course, we need to comply with the latest requirements, and that is what we are doing. Whether there needs to be any review, I am sure the Secretary for the Environment will be looking at this. But I think in the meantime, our priority is to make sure that we try to catch up as much as we can, to clarify what the new requirements are, and get on with the work. Thank you very much.

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

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