

Global Times: HKSAR housing chief resigns over deadly Tai Po fire; CE announces accountability probe and reforms

Beijing, China Oct 30, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Secretary for Housing Winnie Ho had resigned to take political responsibility for the deadly Wang Fuk Court fire in Tai Po, which claimed 168 lives in November 2025, HKSAR Chief Executive John Lee announced on Thursday as the government released an independent committee's investigation report into the tragedy, according to local media reports.

Lee said at a press conference on Thursday afternoon that he had accepted Ho's resignation, although no personal misconduct had been found. Ho offered her resignation during a meeting with Lee on Wednesday, and HKSAR Deputy Financial Secretary Michael Wong would take over her duties, according to media reports.

Before the press conference began, Lee and other senior government officials bowed to the public in apology over the tragedy. Lee expressed deep sorrow over the fire, which killed 168 people and affected 1,984 families, saying that it had brought immense grief to the victims' families and sadness to society as a whole, according to RTHK.

Lee said the independent committee's report identified inadequacies and shortcomings in the responsibilities and the oversight exercised by four government bodies in relation to fire risks associated with renovation works at Wang Fuk Court, namely the Housing Bureau's Independent Checking Unit (ICU), the Buildings Department, the Fire Services Department and the Labour Department.

He announced the launch of the Administrative Responsibility Two-tier Investigation Mechanism under Heads of Department Accountability System (HoD Accountability System). The case will be referred to the Public Service Commission for investigation in accordance with its investigation regulations, with the process to be completed within three months.

The investigation will examine whether relevant personnel had neglected their duties or violated departmental regulations and civil service rules, and make recommendations on possible disciplinary action or administrative sanctions based on the findings.

As part of the reforms, Deputy Financial Secretary Michael Wong announced that a new public housing building control unit would be established in November to replace the Housing Bureau's ICU. The new unit will introduce a new regulatory system and establish dedicated project teams, with designated officers proactively contacting owners' corporations to provide assistance and one-stop communication services to residents.

Secretary for Justice Paul Lam said he supported the committee's recommendation to amend the Competition Ordinance to criminalize bid-rigging and other serious anti-competitive conduct, including price-fixing. The proposed penalties could include up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to HK\$10 million, three times the proceeds, or 50 percent of local turnover.

The fire broke out at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po on November 26, 2025, becoming one of the deadliest residential fires in Hong Kong's history since 1948, according to a transcript from an evidential hearing held on 19 March 2026 by the Independent Committee investigating the fire.

The independent committee found that the fire was most likely caused by a heat source, probably a lit cigarette, that ignited combustible materials, while unsafe construction materials, including non-fire-retardant scaffolding nets, and human errors or negligence contributed to the rapid spread of the blaze and heavy casualties, according to RTHK.

The independent committee submitted its report to Lee on October 22 after holding 30 days of evidential hearings and hearing oral evidence from 80 factual and expert witnesses, according to the HKSAR government.

The committee was tasked with examining the causes of the deadly Wang Fuk Court fire in Tai Po and related issues. The government has pledged comprehensive reforms in areas including the supervision of building maintenance works, building management and the regulation of fire service installations.

Willy Kin Chi Fu, president of the Association for the Promotion of Rule of Law, Education and Technology, told the Global Times on Thursday that he supported the government's decision to release the independent committee's report, Lee's public apology, Ho's resignation to take political responsibility and the launch of investigations into regulatory shortcomings involving the four government bodies. Public accountability and political responsibility are necessary responses to the tragedy, he said.

Fu noted that the report put forward 120 recommendations to address systemic loopholes in building maintenance and renovation works. He highlighted the government's reform measures, including efforts to criminalize bid-rigging, establish a dedicated building maintenance support body to assist property owners, strengthen penalties under the Buildings Ordinance, and set up a steering committee led by the Chief Secretary for Administration to oversee the implementation of reforms.

The weight of the 120 recommendations shows that the problems were not merely the result of individual officials' mistakes, but reflected deep-rooted shortcomings," Fu said. He stressed that supporting accountability also means supporting every subsequent step toward implementing the reforms. "Only by ensuring that these reforms are effectively implemented can we provide the most responsible response to the loss of 168 lives," he added.

The HKSAR government's release of the independent committee's report on the deadly Wang Fuk Court fire, along with its decisions on criminal accountability, administrative accountability and political responsibility, and its proposed systematic reforms, demonstrates its commitment to putting people first, upholding the rule of law, confronting problems and improving governance, the State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office commented on Thursday. These measures will help strengthen social unity, build consensus on reforms and advance Hong Kong's transition from stability to prosperity, it said.

Media Contact

Anna Li

*****@globaltimes.com.cn

Source : Global Times

[See on IssueWire](#)