

Remarks by S for S after Fight Crime Committee meeting (with video)

Following is the remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, at a media session after the Fight Crime Committee meeting at the Central Government Offices today (January 13):

Reporter: National security police today took away Robert Chung, the head of organisation HKPORI (Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute), for investigation. Police said that he was suspected of using his company to assist an abscondee, but Chung said earlier that his company had ended the employment relationship with the abscondee in 2022. Can you explain what sort of assistance was given? How the company was used and is it related to company funds? My second question is HKPORI has previously published survey results showing that some government officials are unpopular, are you concerned that today police's action will be seen as the government targeting its critics?

Secretary for Security: First of all, as you said, Mr Chung was being invited to police station for investigation, suspected of assisting absconder. At this moment in time, Mr Chung has not been arrested. I think the case is under investigation and I am afraid that I cannot go into details of the investigation. This has nothing to do with any research being done by Mr Chung or his organisation. I think the whole investigation is focusing on how Mr Chung and his organisation assist the absconder, and it has absolutely nothing to do with the results of the poll.

Reporter: As you said that the taken away was not related to the survey or any work appertaining to HKPORI, but then why is there a need for police to visit the PORI's office right now? As Chung has resigned over two and a half years ago, why is the action not taken earlier? And today is the first day of the Asian Financial Forum, and as Robert Chung is a scholar, why is the action carried today? Any worry that this would damage Hong Kong's international reputation? Thank you.

Secretary for Security: I think the rule of law in Hong Kong is the best way to ensure the development of Hong Kong, including economic development. I think if anyone is suspected of being involved in some crimes, we are duty-bound to locate him for investigation.

Reporter: Regarding police's action to take away pollster Robert Chung for investigation, why did the police decide to do it today? Since it has been a while that the government has announced a wanted list for alleged absconders and have the police seized anything during the process?

Second, on the task force travelling to Thailand, I understand that the group won't stay there for too long, so how confident is the administration in bringing back all who are still in the region in the short run, and are there any follow-up actions or plans to liaise with other countries in the

region, like Myanmar?

Secretary for Security: First of all, regarding the invitation of Mr Chung back to police station for investigation, I think the time is determined by the Police officers in connection with a lot of considerations, for example, the evidence in hand etc.

You mentioned about the operation in Thailand for the safe return of those people being lured to overseas and detained to engage in illegal work. First of all, I would like to once again appeal to people of Hong Kong, when you look at those cases, those victims are being lured to Southeast Asian countries under the pretence that you have a high pay, and comparatively you do not have a special skill. Actually this is very suspicious. I would also like to confirm that no one was abducted during their stay in Thailand.

The Under Secretary for Security led a delegation to visit Thailand starting from yesterday, and actually on this morning, they have met with the Minister of Justice of Thailand, who is a member of the Anti Trafficking-in-Persons Committee which is directly under the direction of the Prime Minister. In fact, the Minister of Justice attaches great importance to our concern and they have responded positively. They said they will do their utmost to help with the safe return of the Hong Kong people.

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