

S for S speaks on arrest operation by Hong Kong Police's National Security Department (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at a media session at Central Government Offices, Tamar, today (June 17):

Reporter: First, can Mr Lee tell us whether the reports concerned are commentary, or whether Apple Daily was simply quoting people like interviewees and people they interviewed? How can reporters draw the line when they are reporting on foreign sanctions or actions targeting China or Hong Kong without getting into trouble? And are you saying media outlets should in future self-censor all this content? Second question, when you say people should distance themselves from Apple Daily "criminals", are you saying that people should not buy Apple Daily papers or stocks anymore? They should not share their posts, or they should not even like their posts on social media or they will get into trouble? Thank you very much.

Secretary for Security: This case involved a conspiracy. We are talking a conspiracy in which there are a series of acts. The Police have already informed the media that one of the acts involved publication in Apple Daily and also online news regarding articles that invite foreign countries or external elements to impose sanctions or take hostile activities against Hong Kong and the PRC. This is the conspiracy. We are not talking about media work or journalists' work. We are talking about a conspiracy in which the suspects tried to make use of journalistic work to collude with a foreign country or external elements to impose sanction or take hostile activities against Hong Kong and the PRC, so we need to look at that. And also we need to differentiate what these suspects have done from normal journalistic work. Normal journalistic work, of course, takes place freely and lawfully in Hong Kong, and I do not envisage any professional journalists would be conspiring to do any act to endanger national security. So the answer is simple – do your journalistic work as freely as you like in accordance with the law provided you do not conspire or have any intention to break the Hong Kong law and certainly not the Hong Kong National Security Law. The second thing is, the suspects have been arrested on strong evidence that they are conspiring to endanger national security. It is your choice whether you will regard them as part of you, who go about your journalistic work lawfully and properly. If anybody's act causes damage to the reputation of journalistic work as a whole because they are involved in a conspiracy, then it is only to the good and credibility of Hong Kong journalistic work that action is taken against the criminals who make use of journalistic work as a tool to further their criminal activities.

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