

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (May 14):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Lee. Firstly, did the Government spend any resources to surveil and monitor Hong Kong residents who have moved to the UK (United Kingdom), including former activists? Do you think that the future of the Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) in other countries could be at risk following similar arrests in the UK, and also Germany? And what will you do to protect Hong Kong's interests and the ETOs' abilities to provide services for the city's economic interests after this incident, and what assistance would the Government render to Mr Yuen, the person who is arrested and involved in this case? Thank you.

Chief Executive: The Chinese Embassy in the UK has made a statement about this matter. The Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government has also issued a statement on this matter. The Chinese side firmly rejects and strongly condemns the UK's fabrication in the so-called case, and its unwarranted accusation against the Hong Kong SAR Government. That is the statement made by the Chinese Embassy in the UK. The Chinese Embassy in the UK has made serious representations to the UK side on this matter. The Hong Kong Government has demanded the UK Government to provide full information of this matter. We are waiting for their reply. I must emphasise that for the ETO in London, its duties are to maintain close liaison with interlocutors in the local government, business, think tanks in various sectors, with a view to enriching bilateral ties in different areas, such as trade, investment, arts and culture, enhancing local people and enterprises' knowledge of Hong Kong's unique strengths, and promoting the economic and trade interests of Hong Kong. We have seriously demanded the UK side to fairly handle the matter, effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office's Office Manager who was alleged to be involved, and ensure that the normal work of the ETO is not affected. Any attempt to make unwarranted allegation against the Hong Kong SAR Government is unacceptable.

The ETOs will, of course, pursue their duties full-heartedly and legitimately. I have explained the purpose of setting up these offices. The promotion of trade as a result of these ETOs means a lot to Hong Kong and means a lot to different places. And I think the ETOs, in the different places where they are set up, will continue to pursue their duties faithfully and proudly because it is a right thing to do for the benefit of different people. For example, the ETOs in the US (United States) are promoting trade, and the US is enjoying a trade surplus, which amounts to over US\$200 billion over (the past) 10 years. So any attempt to interfere with the work of the ETOs in different places will be against free trade and free economy, and will be harming the economy of the countries that try to do bad things to the

operation of the ETOs. We will, of course, do our best to protect the rightful interest and the rights that they enjoy as a result of legitimate officials working for the Hong Kong Government, and we'll urge all governments to respect the rightful duty of our ETOs in their economies.

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