

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (June 22):

Reporter: As you just mentioned, Secretary for Security John Lee said Apple Daily wasn't involved in normal journalistic work. How do you define what is normal journalistic work? Second question, research into COVID-19 increasingly argue that limits on outdoor gatherings for Hong Kong residents who don't understand the logic behind allowing 180 people to be gathered indoors, but only four people outdoors. How do you explain the scientific reasons for this policy? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Let me answer the second question first because it is a follow-up to the discussion we had on the Hong Kong SAR Government's work to tackle COVID-19 as announced in the press conference I convened yesterday. I have made it very clear and I have admitted that in determining social distancing measures, there is no exact science. It is a judgement based on several factors. Factor number one is, of course, the epidemic situation. Factor number two will be the nature of the activity that we need to regulate. Third will be the society's needs for that sort of activity. Business activities have very strong aspiration to resume and normal people want to have more social activities like going to swimming, organising activities and face-to-face learning at schools and so on. And then there is a risk factor that we have to assess under that sort of gathering – is the risk manageable, and when we think that it is manageable, whether it will actually be manageable. Then it brings me to the final factor, and that is whoever is organising that type of activity, whether it has the capability to fulfil the requirements imposed on that sort of activity under the social distancing measures. You will realise that when we have social distancing measures, even when we said we are relaxing the number of people sitting around the table, opening hours, each and every type of the venues has to comply with very clear mandatory requirements imposed by the Secretary for Food and Health. So, taking into account all those factors, we feel that the coming stage of relaxation should be based on venues. It will be in a better position to meet all those requirements taking into account all those factors.

Your first question is very interesting. What is normal journalistic work? I think you are in a better position to answer that question. I can only say what is breaching the law based on the advice from my enforcement authorities as well as the Department of Justice on what activities or acts will be suspected of breaching the laws of Hong Kong, including the national security law. And the law is very well defined. This piece of national security law has embraced all the important legal concepts in every piece of legislation. There is presumption of innocence before trial, there are very

clear offences to be raised, and the four types of offences endangering national security are also well defined. Journalists should be in a position to judge whether one is breaching the law. I would only want to add that I heard something from the US government about this arrest. They said that, "as we all know exchanging views with foreigners in journalism should never be a crime". What we are talking about is not exchanging views between foreigners and journalists. It is violating the law as defined in the national security law and based on very clear evidence which will bring the case to court. Don't try to underplay the significance of breaching the national security law, and don't try to beautify these acts of endangering national security, which the foreign governments have taken so much to their heart. Whenever they talk about things that they are doing they will put it under the banner of safeguarding national security. What is the basis of applying that sort of double standards to the situation of the People's Republic of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region? Don't try to accuse the Hong Kong authorities for using the national security law as a tool to suppress the media or to stifle the freedom of expression. All those accusations made by the US government, I'm afraid, are wrong.

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