

# Transcript of remarks by S for S after FCC meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at a media session at Central Government Offices, Tamar, after the Fight Crime Committee meeting this afternoon (December 17):

Reporter: First question is about online romance scam. Does it worry you that the number of cases has increased despite a lot of publicity and education campaigns? Are these campaigns failing? Looking forward, what can the authorities do? What else can they do to increase people's awareness? Also, may I trouble you to tell us in English what the government will do to assist the four men jailed in the Philippines? What it has done and what it will do in future?

Secretary for Security: Thank you for your questions. Regarding the increase in the number of deception cases, in particular romance deceptions, of course, I pay special attention to this trend. It is a reflection of the nature of the crime itself. First of all, it is because there is a relatively low cost on the criminals. And also even though the successful rate may not be high, the amount of money that can be deceived in one single case can be a lot. I have said in Cantonese that in one case, one victim over four years, because of the deception, the victim lost over \$180 million. So, that is a lot. It is because of the low cost on the criminals and because of the likely big amount of money that can be deceived in one single case, we have to accept the fact that this crime is likely to be like drugs, robbery or any other crime that will be with us for a long time. So, what is important is that the law enforcement agencies will inform the public as soon as possible the new modus operandi so that prospective victims can take precaution and protect themselves. We altogether work against this crime. We, together, publicise and raise the awareness of prospective victims. When we are in doubt, then we seek help. There is a hotline which is 24/7 and an anti-deception centre where any member of the public can ring at any time to ask for help or information. Since its establishment in 2017, it has received over 30 000 calls from the public and stopped at least 500 cases in which money has been stopped from getting out of Hong Kong. So far, the amount of money that has been stopped amounts to \$1.3 billion. So, that is something that we should try to inform the public so that whenever they have any doubt then they seek help.

In regard to the case involving the four Hong Kong citizens who were convicted in court in the Philippines for drug offences, today the Honourable James To has reflected the families' requests and concern through a meeting with Immigration Officers who are responsible for offering help to Hong Kong residents who need help overseas. I have actually spoken to officials of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (OCMFA) and expressed the concern of the HKSAR Government in regard to this matter. The officials are very receptive to what I have said which includes asking them

for special attention to this case, whatever they can do to ensure that the legal and other rights of the four Hong Kong residents are fully protected and they will have a fair and just trial. Officials from the Chinese Embassy (the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines) made visits to the four Hong Kong residents so as to offer help as far as possible. The OCMFA officials are very receptive and have indicated that they would do all they can to help. That is the first thing I want to inform you.

The second thing is I shall be writing to the Consul-General of the Philippines in Hong Kong (CG) to reflect the concern of the HKSAR Government in regard to this case and also to urge the CG to assist to ensure that the rights of the Hong Kong residents are fully protected and the trial in regard to this case should be dealt with in a very fair and speedy manner. I shall discuss with my colleagues of the Immigration Department subsequent to their meeting with the Honourable James To and then I will write to the CG either today or tomorrow.

Reporter: Do you personally think that the sentence and conviction of the four Hong Kong men are fair and grounded? What else could you do at the moment to help the group and also their family members?

Secretary for Security: I will leave the case to run its course of justice. I think justice is important. A fair trial will do justice to the four Hong Kong residents. In regard to what we can help them, I have earlier informed you and I want to inform the Hong Kong people that the Hong Kong Immigration Officers have met with the Honourable James To who has relayed some of the concerns and requests of the family members. We will, of course, do the best we can to ensure that their legal rights and also human rights are fully protected. We, of course, think that a fair and speedy trial to ensure that justice is done for the four Hong Kong residents is important. I have already spoken to the officials of the OCMFA and they are very receptive to my requests and they have promised that they will do everything they can to ensure that the rights of the four Hong Kong residents will be protected and also to accede to their requests for necessities or personal needs. They will be making more visits to the four Hong Kong residents. I shall also be writing to the Philippine CG as I have mentioned earlier to repeat those points.