

June 29, 2021

The Editor
Bloomberg

Dear Editor,

Your article “Friendless Apple Daily Gets Nothing But the Law” (June 22) contains misleading and incorrect information.

It could not be further from the truth to suggest that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is using the Hong Kong National Security Law (HKNSL) as a tool to undermine press freedoms in Hong Kong.

The case in question is about a suspected conspiracy to commit collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security in breach of the HKNSL. The defendants have been charged with a conspiracy involving the use of journalistic work as a tool to collude with a foreign country or with external elements to impose sanction or engage in hostile activities against the HKSAR and the People’s Republic of China.

Let me stress that freedom of speech, of the press and of publication are among the rights and freedoms explicitly mentioned in Article 4 of the HKNSL as being protected in accordance with Hong Kong laws.

The HKNSL also ensures the resolute, full and faithful implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” principle – it will not change Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy or undermine the legitimate rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people under the Basic Law.

Apart from embracing key legal concepts including the presumption of innocence, the prohibition of double jeopardy, and the right to defend oneself and other rights in judicial proceedings that a criminal suspect, defendant and other parties in judicial proceedings are entitled to under the law, the four types of offences endangering national security provided in the HKNSL are also clearly defined.

The freezing of assets related to the media company in question was taken in accordance with Schedule 3 to the Implementation Rules for Article

43 of the HKNSL, which states, where the Secretary for Security has reasonable grounds to suspect that any property held by any person is offence related property, the Secretary may issue a notice to freeze that property.

Endangering national security is a very serious crime, and should not be downplayed. We totally refute any irresponsible and false accusations that the authorities in Hong Kong are trying to “intimidate the rest of the media”.

Any law enforcement actions taken by the law enforcement agencies of the HKSAR Government are strictly according to the law, based on evidence, and for the acts of the persons or entities concerned, which has nothing to do with freedom of the press, or the background of the media company concerned.

The HKNSL took effect on June 30, 2020, following months of unprecedented riots and serious violence in the city. Since then, calm has returned to Hong Kong and our reputation as a safe, secure and vibrant global business and financial centre has been restored.

Yours sincerely,

John K C Lee
Chief Secretary for Administration
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government