

June 29, 2021

The Editor
Financial Times

Dear Editor,

Your article “Apple Daily case is assault on Hong Kong’s freedoms” (June 24) brazenly ignores our efforts to deal with threats to national security.

Every country has a right – indeed, a duty – to protect its sovereignty and national security. Why should our country be any different?

The article made unfounded accusations against the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government of using the Hong Kong National Security Law (HKNSL) as a tool to target journalists and “snuff out the 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 making 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.

Your claim that it amounts to “criminalisation of normal journalism and opinion-writing” is twisting the facts and absolutely incorrect.

Freedom of speech, of the press and of publication are among 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.

Law-abiding investors and entrepreneurs have nothing to worry about.

Yours sincerely,

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