

CONTEMPT OF COURT

AGC gives blogger Au till today to respond

SOCIOPOLITICAL blogger Alex Au had up till today to put up a letter from the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) informing him that his post on plastic surgeon Woffles Wu's case was contemptuous of the courts.

Dr Wu was fined \$1,000 last month for getting an employee to take the rap for two speeding offences.

In the July 6 letter, the AGC had set two conditions for Mr Au to avoid contempt of court proceedings – that he post an apology and the letter on his blog.

By yesterday evening, Mr Au had replaced the post of June 18 with the apology. Some time late last night, he posted the letter into the same entry. To see the letter and the apology, one has to go to the blog (yawningbread.wordpress.com) and scroll down to the June 18 entry.

In the letter, the AGC said that the post “alleges that our courts are biased towards those whom you describe as well-connected... These are serious allegations which scandalise our courts. Your allegations are scurrilous and false.”

“Contempt of court is a serious offence. Nevertheless we have decided that no proceedings will be commenced against you if you withdraw your comments and apologise,” the letter continued.

In a statement to the media yesterday, the AGC said: “These distortions included implying that Woffles Wu was treated favourable as firstly he should have been charged under Section 182 of the Penal Code, rather than S81(3) Road Traffic Act, and secondly that he was treated better in comparison to other cases where false statements were given.

“However, before 2008, sections 182 and 81(3) attracted the same maximum fine and maximum custodial sentence, while the other cases cited involved false statements being given to cover up more serious offences,” it said.

When asked to comment on whether it's a warning to the blogosphere, Nominated MP and SMU Assistant Professor Eugene Tan told TNP: “Certainly one can say that it has a salutary effect of reminding people that comments made online are also subject to the same laws as in mainstream media.

“But of course, there'll be people who will take the view that this is a warning and I think we shouldn't be surprised if the demand for apology for his publication will have such an effect.”

– Additional reporting by Ng Hui Wen