

Taiwan minister draws ire on iPhone posting

October 1 2012

(AP)—Galaxy S3, iPhone 5 or HTC One? That's a tough question for Taiwan's Cabinet ministers.

Senior Taiwanese officials have been under scrutiny for the smartphones they use—specifically whether they support Taiwan's HTC Corp., which plays a big role the island's high-tech economy.

Hu Yu-wei, the information minister and government spokesman, stirred up controversy Sunday for posting a picture of an [iPhone 5](#) on his Facebook page.

"Help the economy and bolster consumption," Hu wrote under the picture showing the Apple handset's black case with its telltale icon.

He was immediately blasted by the media and on the Internet.

"Can you imagine the South Korean government spokesman speaking out for [iPhone 5](#) on his Facebook page?" asked the mass circulation United Daily News. It noted that President Ma Ying-jeou is a big HTC fan and gives out HTC [handsets](#) as gifts for foreign dignitaries.

Facing heavy criticism, Hu later explained that he did not own the latest phone by Apple Inc. and was only considering purchasing one.

Hu's act might make economic sense as Taiwan's GDP is forecast to grow just over 1 percent amid the sputtering [global economy](#), and officials are encouraging people to spend more to boost domestic

consumption.

After all, iPhone 5 handsets use many Taiwan-made components and are mainly assembled in China by Taiwan's Foxconn Technology Group.

But HTC's declining fortunes—largely in the face of stronger competition from Apple and [Samsung Electronics Co.](#)—have been cited as a major reason why Taiwan's exports have declined for six months running.

Taiwan's Economics Minister Shih Yen-hsiang has called on the public to buy HTC products, noting that HTC produces its handsets in Taiwan and is more vital to the island's economy than most computer makers, which assemble their products in China.

Hu explained that he now uses the HTC One, a new model that offers users better camera and musical experiences.

"I use HTC, and so do most Cabinet officials," Hu said. "The accusation of my being not patriotic was a misunderstanding."

However, he said, Taiwan's democracy should mature further so "all Cabinet officials can be free from fears of being caught not using HTC phones."

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Citation: Taiwan minister draws ire on iPhone posting (2012, October 1) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-taiwan-minister-ire-iphone.html>

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