

China mulls implementing national anthem law in HK, Macao SARs

China's top legislature Tuesday heard draft decisions to apply the newly-adopted National Anthem Law in Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions.

According to the bills, the National Anthem Law, taking effect on Oct. 1, will be included in Annex III of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and Annex III of the Basic Law of the Macao SAR, which regulates national laws to be applied in the two regions.

The bills were submitted to the bi-monthly legislative session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), which opened Monday.

According to the Basic Laws of Hong Kong and Macao SARs, national laws shall not be applied in the two regions, except for those listed in the Annex III.

The NPC Standing Committee may add or delete the laws listed in the Annex III after consulting the committees of the Basic Laws of Hong Kong and Macao SARs under the NPC Standing Committee and the SAR governments.

The National Anthem Law is among laws relating to defense, foreign affairs and other matters outside the limits of the autonomy of the two SARs, according to Zhang Rongshun, deputy director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee.

"The NPC Standing Committee consulted the two committees and two SAR governments, all of which agreed that it is in line with the Basic Laws and appropriate to add the National Anthem Law to the Annex III," he said. "To safeguard the authority of the national anthem – one of the national symbols – is to safeguard the authority of the state, the people and the Chinese nation."

"In recent years, incidents of disrespecting the national anthem had occurred in Hong Kong, challenging the bottom line of the principle of 'one country, two systems' and social morality and triggering rage among Chinese including most Hong Kong residents," Zhang said. "It is urgent and important to apply the National Anthem Law in Hong Kong, in a bid to prevent and handle such offences."

The Hong Kong SAR is expected to implement the law by way of local legislation if the decision is adopted.

"The local law on national flag, emblem and anthem, adopted by the Macao SAR in 1999, has played a constructive role in properly using the national anthem, safeguarding national authority and promoting patriotism among local residents," Zhang said.

Although the local law's regulations related to the national anthem are in line with the principles of national law, Macao is expected to make improvements if the decision is adopted, according to Zhang.