

Court of First Instance delivers verdict on conspiracy to commit subversion case

The Court of First Instance of the High Court today (May 30) delivered a verdict on 16 defendants who had pleaded not guilty in a conspiracy to commit subversion case. Apart from two defendants, against whom the evidence was insufficient for the court to be sure of their participation in the conspiracy, the remaining 14 defendants were convicted. The Department of Justice (DoJ) has immediately informed the court of its intention to make an appeal in respect of the defendants who were not convicted.

The reasons for verdict pointed out that by March and April 2020, the ultimate aim and purpose of the so-called "Project 35+" had been very clear and made known to the public, which was to undermine, destroy or overthrow the existing political system and structure of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) established under the Basic Law and the "one country, two systems" principle. The persons concerned conspired to indiscriminately vote down the Government's budget and public expenditure proposals after securing a majority in the Legislative Council (LegCo) through the so-called "primary election", in order to compel the HKSAR Government to accede to the so-called "Five Demands Not One Less" and force the Chief Executive to dissolve the LegCo and ultimately resign, thus rendering the Government unable to introduce any new policies or implement existing policies on benefitting people's livelihood. The power and authority of both the Chief Executive and the HKSAR Government would be greatly undermined, which would necessarily amount to a serious interference in, disruption or undermining of the performance of duties and functions in accordance with the law by the body of power of the HKSAR, subverting the State power.

During the trial, evidence adduced in the court revealed that the persons concerned put forward the "10 Steps to mutual destruction" which would bring Hong Kong society to a standstill through large-scale street riots and other means at the same time. Coupled with international political and economic sanctions, "mutual destruction" would be achieved, causing suffering to members of the public.

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, said, "The verdict showed that the court confirmed the occurrence of the offence of conspiracy to commit subversion, which aimed at undermining, destroying or overthrowing the existing political system and structure of the HKSAR established under the Basic Law and the 'one country, two systems' principle. A total of 47 persons were charged in the case. Apart from the two defendants, against whom the evidence was found insufficient for the court to be sure of their participation in the conspiracy offence, the rest of the 45 defendants were convicted, showing the scale and the seriousness of the criminal scheme. With

regard to the verdict on the two defendants, the DoJ has already informed the court of its intention to appeal. It is the duty of the HKSAR to safeguard national security and we will fight resolutely against acts and activities endangering national security. In this regard, the HKSAR Government will ensure that laws are observed and strictly enforced, and will do our utmost to prevent, suppress and impose punishment for acts and activities endangering national security to fulfil this justified responsibility."

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "During the trial, external forces blatantly smeared the Judiciary, the DoJ and the law enforcement department, and even created pressure through intimidatory political means and misleading remarks, in an attempt to interfere with the fair trial. This flagrant trample on the rule of law is a despicable attempt, which the HKSAR Government strongly condemns."