

Government again strongly condemns holding of "referendum" on strike and class boycott

Referring to the call by some groups for holding a so-called "referendum" on holding a strike and class boycott to oppose the Decision by the National People's Congress (NPC) on establishing and improving the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to safeguard national security and the enactment of a national security law for Hong Kong by the Standing Committee of the NPC (NPCSC), a spokesman for the HKSAR Government today (June 20) strongly condemned the call again.

"The legislation to be enacted by the NPCSC to safeguard national security aims to prevent, cease and punish acts and activities by an extremely small minority of people who seriously endanger national security, thereby protecting the vast majority of law-abiding citizens. This will restore Hong Kong to a safe and stable city after having been hit with violent disruptions in the past year," the spokesman stressed.

"This important initiative aims to ensure the robustness of 'one country, two systems' in Hong Kong and safeguard the prosperity and stability of our society. The national security law will not affect the legitimate rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong residents. Judicial independence and the core values of Hong Kong will also be protected."

The spokesman pointed out that individuals or groups with ulterior motives have recently been using different means to smear the work to enact the national security law, as well as disseminate false and misleading information to deceive the public, attempting to create social instability.

"The Basic Law and Hong Kong's legal system do not provide for any referendum mechanism. Conducting any form of so-called 'referendum' will have no constitutional basis or legal effect. Holding a 'referendum' on a strike and class boycott is obviously taking advantage of the public and students for political purposes," the spokesman reiterated.

"A civil service staff union is openly calling on civil servants to participate in a joint-union operation for holding a so-called 'referendum on a strike' for opposing the legislation of the national security law. This is absolutely unacceptable. Civil servants have the responsibility to implement properly the work concerning the legislation of the national security law under the leadership of the Chief Executive, and should not oppose the legislation. Participating in the so-called 'referendum on a strike' in the name of a civil service staff union will lead outside parties to mistakenly think that they represent the majority of civil servants and that civil servants are acting against the Government, thus seriously tarnishing the well-established reputation of the civil service.

On the reported use of District Council (DC) members' ward offices as the relevant polling stations, the spokesman said that according to sections 1 to 3 of General Standards of the Code of Conduct for Members of a District Council or Its Committees: a DC member shall not do anything which may compromise or impair his or her integrity, impartiality, objectivity or his or her ability to perform his or her duties; a DC member shall conduct himself or herself in such a way as not to place himself or herself in a position which may be contrary to the generally assumed standard of conduct expected of a DC member; and a DC member shall ensure that his or her conduct must not be such as to bring the DC into disrepute. Furthermore, paragraph 23 of the Guidelines on the Remuneration Package for Members of the District Councils of the HKSAR stipulates that a DC member must ensure that the ward office operated with the support of the Operating Expenses Reimbursement and other accountable allowances/expenses reimbursements for DC members is used for the discharge of DC duties. If the ward office is used as the polling station of the so-called "referendum", the related expenses will not be reimbursed.

The spokesman added, "Besides, some organisations have repeatedly initiated through different means, including using schools as venues for expressing political demands and the holding of a so-called 'referendum' on a class boycott as an attempt to stop the enactment of the national security law. A school should be a place for building character, enhancing understanding of national identity, nurturing awareness of abiding by the law and providing a happy learning environment. It should not involve politics. Parents and teachers should discern facts from fallacies and lead by example, working together to bring tranquillity back to schools.

"Schools should adopt appropriate measures. Should there be any students initiating, organising, joining or encouraging their fellows to participate in these activities, schools should immediately urge them to stop. Students should be reminded to cherish their orderly campus lives and learning opportunities. If individual students refuse to comply with the instructions after repeated persuasion, schools should take appropriate counselling and disciplinary actions according to the school-based mechanism to maintain discipline and order. In case such student misbehaviour is noted, the Education Bureau will also liaise and follow up with the schools concerned to render support and give instruction."

The spokesman stressed that the HKSAR Government firmly and resolutely supports and fully co-operates in implementing the work relating to the Decision passed by the NPC and the enactment by the NPCSC of the national security law to discharge its duty of safeguarding national security.