

Government explains reasons for issue of press releases

In response to the confusion caused by the issue of three press releases on April 18 and 19 relating to the recent remarks made by the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council (HKMAO) and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (LOCPG), a spokesman for the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau gives the following explanations today (April 20):

"In the afternoon of April 18, the first press release titled 'Government responds to media enquiries on remarks by HKMAO and LOCPG' was issued. As the sentence 'the LOCPG is one of the three organisations set up by the Central Government in accordance with Article 22(2) of the Basic Law' is factually inaccurate, a revised press release was issued to the media to supersede the first one in the evening of the same day."

"Article 22(2) of the Basic Law stipulates that if there is a need for departments of the Central Government, or for provinces, autonomous regions, or municipalities directly under the Central Government to set up offices in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, they must obtain the consent of the government of the Region and the approval of the Central People's Government."

"The Xinhua News Agency (Hong Kong Branch), the antecedent of LOCPG, was founded in May 1947. It had all along discharged relevant responsibilities in Hong Kong as the representative office authorised by the Central People's Government (CPG). The Agency continued to operate as an office authorised by the CPG after Hong Kong's return to the Motherland. In December 1999, the State Council decided to change the name of 'Xinhua News Agency (Hong Kong Branch)' to 'Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region'. Hence, the Liaison Office was not set up in accordance with Article 22(2) of the Basic Law."

"The objective of the third press release issued subsequently at midnight on April 19 is to elaborate on the amendment, and at the same time to clarify that the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR (OCMFA) was established in accordance with Article 13 of the Basic Law, while the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison (the Garrison) was stationed in the HKSAR in accordance with Article 14 of the Basic Law."

"All offices set up in the HKSAR by the Central Government and their personnel, including LOCPG, OCMFA and the Garrison shall act in accordance with the principle of 'one country, two systems', strictly abide by the Basic Law and the laws of the HKSAR, and discharge their duties in accordance with the laws."

"The LOCPG is authorised by the CPG to handle issues relating to Hong Kong. It is entrusted with the authority and responsibility to represent the CPG to express views and exercise supervisory power on major issues such as those concerning the relationship between the CPG and the SAR, the accurate implementation of the Basic Law, the proper operation of the political system and the well-being of the community as a whole. Discharging such duties does not constitute any interference with the affairs which the HKSAR administers on its own in accordance with the Basic Law."