

HKSAR Government strongly condemns and opposes smears on fair and open Court sentencing

Regarding the untruthful smearing and unscrupulous attacks made by some government authorities and officials of Western countries (including the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), the European Union, Australia, Canada and more), anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians and foreign media on the sentences handed down by the court yesterday (November 19) to 45 convicted individuals in a case of conspiracy to commit subversion in accordance with law, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (November 20) strongly condemned and opposed such acts.

A spokesman for the Government said that, "Following as many as 118 days of open hearings and thorough considerations of the relevant legal principles, a massive amount of evidence and submissions from the prosecution and the defence, the Court of First Instance of the High Court had earlier delivered the reasons for verdict which comprises over 300 pages, as well as two annexes totalling over 400 pages which summarised the evidence of the prosecution and defence witnesses, detailing the courts' analysis of the law and evidence as well as the reasons rendering the verdict of conviction. Similarly, the court has also clearly listed out its reasons and considerations in sentencing in its 82-page reasons for sentence. All relevant information is open and can be downloaded from the webpage of the Judiciary.

"Any reasonable and fair person, upon reviewing the court's judgment, would be convinced of the severity of the crime and the guilt of the convicted individuals, supported by irrefutable evidence. Despite these ironclad facts, Western countries, anti-China organisations and politicians, and foreign media continue to distort the truth and maliciously attack. The HKSAR Government must again firmly refute these claims to set the record straight."

The spokesman pointed out, "Evidence adduced in the court revealed that 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', such that the Chief Executive would be required to dissolve the LegCo in accordance with Article 50 of the Basic Law; and after re-electing the LegCo, vote down the Budget again, forcing the Chief Executive to resign, thus paralysing the Government. At the same time, they sought to bring Hong Kong society to a standstill through large-scale street riots and other means. Coupled with international political and economic sanctions, causing endless harm and suffering to Hong Kong society and members of the public.

"The objective of the whole scheme was to exert a severe impact on

society, the economy and people's livelihood and create a constitutional crisis in the HKSAR. The court stated in its reasons for sentencing that had the so-called 'Project 35+' been carried out to the very end, the adverse consequences would be far reaching and no less serious than overthrowing the Government of the HKSAR. Such an attempt to subvert the state power is indeed a serious act endangering national security and has nothing to do with freedom and democracy.

"The proposed imposition of the so-called 'visa restrictions' on HKSAR officials by the US Government smack of despicable political manipulation to intimidate People's Republic of China and HKSAR officials who resolutely safeguard national security. These grossly interfere in China's internal affairs and Hong Kong's affairs, and violate the international law and the basic norms governing international relations. The HKSAR despises such threats and will not be intimidated by such despicable behaviour. The HKSAR will continue to resolutely continue to discharge the duty of safeguarding national security.

"In accordance with international law and international practice based on the Charter of the United Nations, safeguarding national security is an inherent right of all sovereign states. Many common law jurisdictions, including the US, the UK and Canada, have enacted multiple pieces of legislation to safeguard national security. Turning a blind eye to the facts and making exaggerated remarks, the US and some Western countries, anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians, foreign media, and more, have demonstrated typical despicable political manipulation and hypocrisy with double standards. The HKSAR Government strongly urges them to stop interfering in China's internal affairs and Hong Kong affairs, and stop any untruthful reporting on and malicious smearing of the relevant judgment," the spokesman reiterated.