

HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects skewed remarks by foreign countries in name of so-called "Media Freedom Coalition" members against press freedom in Hong Kong

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (December 29) strongly disapproved of and firmly rejected the fact-twisting remarks and baseless smears by foreign countries including the United States and the United Kingdom in the name of so-called "Media Freedom Coalition" members against the safeguarding of freedom of the press, etc. in the HKSAR.

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "Hong Kong people enjoy freedom of the press and freedom of speech as protected under the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. Also, Article 4 of the Hong Kong National Security Law stipulates that such freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong residents shall be protected in accordance with the law in safeguarding national security in the HKSAR. Nonetheless, freedom of the press and freedom of speech are not absolute. The exercise of them may be subject to restrictions that are provided by law and are necessary for pursuing legitimate aims such as protection of national security or public order. Journalists, like everyone else, have an obligation to abide by all the laws."

The spokesman pointed out, "In fact, the media landscape in Hong Kong is as vibrant as ever. As a case in point, a total of 213 media organisations, be they based locally, in the Mainland or overseas, are registered with the HKSAR Government News and Media Information System of the Information Services Department at present. As always, the media can exercise their freedom of the press in accordance with the law. Their freedom of commenting on and criticising government policies remains uninhibited as long as this is not in violation of the law."

The spokesman stressed, "Hong Kong is a society underpinned by the rule of law and has always adhered to the principle that laws must be obeyed and lawbreakers held accountable. The law enforcement agencies of the HKSAR have been taking law enforcement actions based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law in respect of the acts of the persons or organisations concerned, which have nothing to do with freedom of the press, or the background of any person or organisation."

The spokesman said, "Attempts by any foreign countries to undermine the rule of law in, and the prosperity and stability of, the HKSAR by slandering the city's situation will only expose the countries' own weakness and faulty

arguments and be doomed to fail. The HKSAR will continue to resolutely discharge the responsibility of safeguarding national security and effectively prevent, suppress and impose punishment for acts and activities that endanger national security in accordance with the law, and safeguard the rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people in accordance with the law at the same time."