

HKSARG responds to passage of acts on Hong Kong by US Senate

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (November 20) expressed deep regret over the passage of the "Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act" and another act on Hong Kong by the Senate of the United States (US) Congress.

A Government spokesman said, "The 'Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act' and the other act on Hong Kong are unnecessary and unwarranted. They will also harm the relations and common interests between Hong Kong and the US.

"Since the return to the Motherland, the HKSAR has been exercising 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' and a high degree of autonomy in strict accordance with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The 'one country, two systems' principle has been fully and successfully implemented. 'One country, two systems' is the best arrangement for maintaining Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability and for making Hong Kong a favourable place to live and work in. The HKSAR Government will continue to implement the 'one country, two systems' principle resolutely in accordance with the Basic Law.

"Safeguarding human rights and freedoms is a constitutional duty of the HKSAR Government. Article 4 of the Basic Law stipulates that the HKSAR shall safeguard the rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and of other persons in the Region in accordance with law. Human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong are fully protected by the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other legislation, in addition to the Basic Law. Also, the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong shall remain in force. The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to human rights and freedoms and is determined to safeguard them.

"In respect of the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Bill), the Chief Executive announced on June 15 that the Bill was suspended and later made it clear that all the legislative work had come to a complete halt. The Chief Executive further announced on September 4 that the HKSAR Government would formally withdraw the Bill and the Secretary for Security withdrew the Bill at the Legislative Council meeting on October 23.

"Since early June this year, there have been over 700 public demonstrations, processions and public meetings staged in Hong Kong. Many of them have eventually turned into violent illegal activities. In response, the Police have been exercising restraint and have been carrying out enforcement actions in strict accordance with the law. The Police have the statutory duty to maintain public safety and public order. Hence, whenever unlawful assembly or violent action occurs, the Police have to take appropriate actions to protect the life and property of the general public, bring offenders to

justice and restore social peace.

"Regarding trade control, Hong Kong has in place a stringent regime which has all along been recognised internationally. Under the Basic Law, Hong Kong is a separate customs territory. We will as always implement comprehensive control on import, export and re-export of strategic commodities in accordance with the laws of Hong Kong and international control lists, as well as carry out rigorous enforcement.

"Concerning constitutional development, universal suffrage of 'one person, one vote' for selecting the Chief Executive and electing all members of the Legislative Council is enshrined as an ultimate aim in the Basic Law. To achieve this aim, the community needs to engage in dialogues, premised on the legal basis and under a peaceful atmosphere with mutual trust, with a view to narrowing differences and attaining a consensus agreeable to all sides. The HKSAR Government will assess the situation carefully and take forward constitutional development in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant Interpretation and Decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress."

The spokesman said, "Hong Kong's unique status was conferred upon by the Basic Law, but not unilaterally granted by any country. The unique status of Hong Kong has all along been widely recognised and respected by the international community. Hong Kong's economic and trade status is also the same as that of other members of the World Trade Organization. Hong Kong has therefore established mutually beneficial co-operative relationship with various trade partners in the world including the US. According to US statistics, the US has in the past ten years earned the largest worldwide bilateral trade surplus with Hong Kong amongst her trade partners in the world, at over USD 33 billion in 2018. According to the latest statistics of Invest Hong Kong and Census and Statistics Department, there are 1 344 US companies in Hong Kong, of which 278 are regional headquarters. At the same time, about 85 000 US citizens live in Hong Kong. Any unilateral change of US economic and trade policy towards Hong Kong will create negative impact on the relations between the two sides as well as US' own interests."

The spokesman reiterated that foreign legislatures should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR.