

Safe and stable environment for good governance: Hong Kong National Security Law heralds fourth anniversary of implementation

Today (June 30) marks the fourth anniversary of the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL). A spokesman for the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) said that with the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO) taking effect upon gazettal on March 23 this year, the legal system and enforcement mechanisms of the HKSAR for safeguarding national security have been improved. The HKSAR Government will continue to strengthen its work on safeguarding national security, and strive to focus its full efforts on developing a vibrant economy and a caring community to foster a greater sense of fulfilment, happiness and security among the people.

The spokesman said, "National security is a top priority for any country, as it forms the basis for a country's existence and development. The HKSAR had long been 'defenceless' in terms of national security, allowing external forces and anti-China disruptors to take advantage. The 'anti-national education' incident in 2012, the illegal 'Occupy Central' movement in 2014, the Mong Kok riot in 2016 and the 'black-clad violence' and Hong Kong version of 'colour revolution' in 2019 caused the public to live in fear. They also sought to destroy the HKSAR's rule of law, public order and political system, seriously endangering national security. Thanks to the decisive act of the Central Authorities in enacting the NSL, which was then promulgated for implementation by the HKSAR in 2020, these shortcomings were addressed and the loopholes in the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the HKSAR to safeguard national security were plugged. The effect of the NSL was immediate. It transformed Hong Kong society from chaos to order, allowing people's livelihoods and economic activities to return to normalcy. Hong Kong's rise in world competitiveness rankings to be among the world's top economies is the best testament to the fact that high-level security protection would underpin high-quality development.

"The NSL and the SNSO are compatible and complementary, jointly establishing a comprehensive and effective legal system for safeguarding national security and ensuring the effective protection of national security. This 'dual legislation and dual enforcement mechanism' gives full play to institutional advantages, building a strong line of defence to maintain security and stability in the HKSAR, as well as providing solid institutional safeguards to promote good governance."

"The laws of the HKSAR on safeguarding national security attach great importance to human rights, stipulating that rights and freedoms enjoyed under the Basic Law and the provisions of the two international covenants as

applied to Hong Kong shall be protected in accordance with the law. The principle of protecting human rights and freedoms is enshrined in statute and is in line with international standards, and is concretely and meticulously covered by various provisions in both the NSL and the SNSO," the spokesman added.

"The national security offences stipulated in the NSL and the SNSO clearly define their elements, penalties, exceptions and defences. These laws actively prevent, suppress and punish acts and activities that endanger national security, in accordance with the principle of the rule of law. They target an extremely small minority of people and organisations that pose a threat to national security, while protecting the lives and property of the general public. Law-abiding persons, including ordinary travellers and businesspeople visiting Hong Kong, will not engage in acts and activities that endanger national security and will not unwittingly violate the law, and therefore have no reason to be concerned. When discharging their duty to safeguard national security, the HKSAR law enforcement agencies have been taking law enforcement actions based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law. The Department of Justice of the HKSAR makes independent prosecutorial decisions, and prosecutions are only commenced if there is sufficient admissible evidence to support a reasonable prospect of conviction and if it is in the public interest to do so. The HKSAR Judiciary exercises judicial power independently in accordance with the law. As guaranteed by the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights, all defendants charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to a fair trial by the Judiciary."

The spokesman stressed, "Since the implementation of the NSL, Hong Kong society has rapidly restored stability. Furthermore, with the SNSO now in effect, national security is protected even more effectively. However, given the increasingly complicated geopolitical situation, Hong Kong still faces ever-changing risks to national security. External forces, people with ulterior motive, and anti-China and destabilising individuals who have absconded overseas continue to smear the situation of the HKSAR, attempting to interfere in fair trials of the court and undermine Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. The HKSAR Government will work in collaboration with various sectors of the community to fully implement the 'dual legislation and dual enforcement mechanism' to safeguard national security, and will continue to heighten the sense of crisis and adhere to a bottom-line mentality, remaining vigilant and prepared to address these challenges."

The spokesman reiterated, "The HKSAR Government is steadfast in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, fully and faithfully upholding the highest principle of 'one country, two systems', while protecting the legal interests, rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people and other people in Hong Kong in accordance with the law. It will resolutely safeguard the overall interest of the community and the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, ensuring the steadfast and successful implementation of 'one country, two systems'."