

Speech by CE at handover ceremony of Central Military Dock

Following is the English translation of the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the handover ceremony of Central Military Dock this morning (September 29):

Director Luo (Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Mr Luo Huining), Mr Zheng (Head of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, Mr Zheng Yanxiong), Commissioner Xie (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR, Mr Xie Feng), Major General Chen (Commander-in-chief of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison (the Garrison), Major General Chen Daoxiang), Major General Cai (Political Commissar of the Garrison, Major General Cai Yongzhong), Major General Tian (Deputy Commander of the Garrison, Major General Tian Yongjiang), Major General Tan (Chief-of-staff of the Garrison, Major General Tan Hailim), distinguished guests and colleagues,

Good morning!

It gives me great pleasure to join you at this simple but solemn ceremony today to witness the official handover of the Central Military Dock (the Military Dock) from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government to the Hong Kong Garrison. This 150-meter-long Military Dock on the northern shore of the Hong Kong Island is the last military facility required to be re-provisioned for use by the Hong Kong Garrison. After the handover of the Military Dock today, the HKSAR Government will have completely fulfilled its relevant responsibilities. This is a historic moment which fully underlines the relationship between the Central Authorities and the HKSAR under "One Country, Two Systems"; it carries an important constitutional significance.

Regarding the military facilities used by the Garrison in the HKSAR, with the exception of the Military Dock, the other 18 military sites have long been used and managed by the Hong Kong Garrison for defence purposes after Hong Kong's return to the Motherland. The HKSAR Government has to leave free 150 metres of the eventual permanent waterfront at a place close to the Central Barracks for the re-provisioning of the Military Dock for the Hong Kong Garrison upon completion of the reclamation works in Central. This arrangement reflected the Central Government's concern for the development needs of Hong Kong, but as the reclamation works which fall under the Central Reclamation Phase III were delayed for many years due to various challenges, the Military Dock has not been handed over to the Garrison until now.

The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Garrisoning of the HKSAR (the Garrison Law) is a national law applicable to the HKSAR under Annex III to the Basic Law. In addition to specifying the Hong Kong

Garrison's authority in managing its military facilities, the Garrison Law also specifically provides that the HKSAR Government shall jointly protect the military facilities within the HKSAR with the Garrison; and shall assist the Hong Kong Garrison in maintaining the security of the military restricted zones. Therefore, same as the other military sites of Hong Kong Garrison in Hong Kong, the HKSAR Government has the responsibility to provide suitable legal protection for the Military Dock. The amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation came into operation on June 29 last year. The HKSAR Government has also actively followed up the preparation, design, and construction of the Military Dock, and has maintained close liaison with the Hong Kong Garrison to jointly contribute to the construction works. I am most delighted that the construction of the Military Dock, the amendments to the statutory plan, and the legislative work were finally completed and the Military Dock is handed over to the Garrison today. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my colleagues for their efforts and to the Garrison for their support.

Defence is of utmost importance to the country and must be fully safeguarded. No persons can enter military sites without authorisation. In response to the recommendation by the HKSAR Government, the Hong Kong Garrison has agreed to consider opening the Military Dock on a discretionary basis to allow the public to enter the non-restricted area of the Military Dock, under the condition that defence work would not be affected. It fully demonstrates the Hong Kong Garrison's care for Hong Kong citizens. The design of the Military Dock harmonises with the surrounding park area and the view of the Victoria Harbour. The Hong Kong Garrison accepted the HKSAR Government's proposal that, except for the side facing the Victoria Harbour, movable gates are installed on the other three sides of the Military Dock such that the gates can be opened for members of the public to walk through. When the Military Dock is closed, pedestrians may continue to use the waterfront park through the walkways on the south of the Military Dock, and the waterfront promenade will remain accessible.

The HKSAR Government has on various occasions in the past explained to the public the background of the Military Dock which is a military site by nature. We believe citizens will understand that the Military Dock, which is a military facility for defense purpose at all times, is situated on a military site and its legal status will not change whether it is open or not. After handing over, the Military Dock will be managed by the Hong Kong Garrison and its future opening arrangements are subject to the management decision of the Hong Kong Garrison having regard to its defence operations. The HKSAR Government respects the Hong Kong Garrison's decision and will provide support when needed.

Over the past 23 years since Hong Kong has returned to the Motherland, the Hong Kong Garrison has been performing its defence duties in the HKSAR strictly in accordance with the Basic Law, the Garrison Law and relevant legislation. It loves the country and Hong Kong. It has provided a solid back-up for upholding the HKSAR's long-term prosperity and stability and is well respected by Hong Kong citizens. On behalf of the HKSAR Government and fellow citizens, I would like to pay tribute and extend my heartfelt thanks

to the Hong Kong Garrison who keeps guard over Hong Kong and cares for the citizens!

Today, we complete this historical mission for national sovereignty and security; the day after tomorrow, we will celebrate the 71st anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, which also coincides with the Mid-Autumn Festival. I wish you all a happy Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day, and I also wish our country prosperity and wish you all good health! Thank you!