

Speech by SJ at National Security Legal Forum (with video)

Following are the opening remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the National Security Legal Forum "Looking Back and Ahead, New Dawn for Development" today (June 8):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the National Security Legal Forum "Looking Back and Ahead, New Dawn for Development" organised by the Department of Justice. In today's forum, we aim at making two very important points.

The first point is that Hong Kong has adhered faithfully to fundamental principles of the rule of law under our common law system in enacting and applying the national security law, and we will continue to do so in future. Judicial decisions concerning the Hong Kong National Security Law since its enactment about four years ago provide clear and cogent evidence that key principles such as the court exercising independent power of adjudication, open justice, and the presumption of innocence had been strictly followed. A careful study of the recently enacted Safeguarding National Security Ordinance would demonstrate that essential elements of an offence are defined with sufficient clarity, human rights and freedoms will be fully protected and reasonable restrictions will be imposed if but only if they are really necessary to safeguard national security in accordance with applicable international standard and practice. These fundamental principles under our common law system constitute the unique characteristics and advantages of Hong Kong under the principle of "one country, two systems". There is absolutely no conceivable reason whatsoever why we would shoot ourselves in the foot by giving up these valuable and indispensable principles.

The second point is that our national security law is not only essential but also conducive to the future development of Hong Kong. The Government is working extremely hard to strengthen Hong Kong's status as an international centre in finance, trade, logistics and other areas; and to improve the livelihood of our fellow citizens. History tells us that we cannot afford disregarding national security risks. Indeed, security and development have a symbiotic relationship: one cannot exist without the other, and one will benefit the other. This is sheer logic and common sense. Our national security law based on the principles of the rule of law provides high-standard security to guarantee and safeguard the better and sustainable development of Hong Kong in the long run.

I firmly believe that, at the end of the forum, you will be convinced there is indeed a rational and objective basis for us to have full confidence in our national security law. And beyond any doubt, we can and shall stand tall and hold our heads high.