

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (April 27):

Reporter: Good Morning, Mrs Lam. Two questions. The first one, how will you see Beijing's strong criticism against the Bar Association's Chairman Paul Harris, denouncing him as an anti-China politician? What is your take on this? Is the Hong Kong Government going to take any actions against Mr Harris? The second question, do you think holding an annual June 4 vigil in Victoria Park may go against the national security law? How will you ensure Hong Kong people to have the freedom of expression in issues Beijing deems sensitive? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the two questions. Incidentally, in answering the first set of questions from the other reporter, I have mentioned, by referring to the blog of the Secretary for Justice issued yesterday that yes, Hong Kong respects and safeguards the individual rights and freedoms including the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of protest and so on, but this is not an absolute right. This right could be restrained in accordance with the law in order to protect the rights of the other people – and the other people, normally, is the great majority of the Hong Kong people, and also to ensure law and order and stability in Hong Kong society. My answer to your first question is, yes, everybody has freedom of expression. They can say whatever they want to say in accordance with the law and as long as they do not deviate or breach the legal provision, I don't have any particular view on that.

The Hong Kong Bar Association is a self-regulatory association, and operating in accordance with its own rules and regulations including the election of a chairman. For the time being, I do not see the case for any government intervention into the affairs of the Hong Kong Bar Association. But of course if there are instances or complaints about the Bar not acting in accordance with Hong Kong's law, then the Government will be called into action.

Similarly, on your second question about whether certain gatherings could continue to be held and whether they will be in breach of the national security law, it much depends on what is going to happen in those gatherings and whether they will fall into the offences expressly prohibited in the national security law, that is, involved in secession, subversion of the Central Government, the Hong Kong SAR Government, engaging in terrorist activities or collusion with an external party to endanger national security. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)