

The Court of First Instance hands down sentence in case of conspiracy to commit subversion

â€‹The Court of First Instance of the High Court today (November 19) handed down sentences to the 45 convicted defendants in a case of conspiracy to commit subversion. Amongst all, a starting point of 15 years' imprisonment was adopted for the principal offender Tai Yiu-ting. Given his guilty plea, his sentence was brought down to 10 years' imprisonment. As regards the others, they were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment ranging from four years and two months to seven years and nine months.

â€‹The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, said, "The sentence shows the court confirmed that the offence of the defendants was extremely serious and they should be severely punished. The reasons for verdict handed down by the court earlier for this case have pointed out clearly that the ultimate aim and purpose of the so-called 'Project 35+' was to undermine, destroy or overthrow the existing political system and structure of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) established under the Basic Law and the 'one country, two systems' principle. The case is extremely serious in nature involving a significant number of defendants. Those involved acted under the guise of democracy and freedom to subvert the political regime of the HKSAR. The objective was to paralyse the Government, exert a severe impact on society, the economy and people's livelihood, create political instability and a constitutional crisis in the HKSAR, and bring the Government to a standstill.

â€‹"This case shows that anyone who intends to subvert state power and endanger national security will ultimately be punished in accordance with the law. Hong Kong is a society underpinned by the rule of law, where laws must be obeyed and lawbreakers must be held accountable. No one is above the law. Anti-China, destabilising forces harm and destabilise Hong Kong and subvert state power under the pretext of so-called democracy, freedom and human rights. The HKSAR Government will pursue their legal liabilities and severe punishment will be imposed in accordance with the law."

The spokesman of the HKSAR Government said, "During the trial, evidence adduced in the Court revealed that the persons concerned put forward the '10 steps to mutual destruction' which would bring Hong Kong society to a standstill through large-scale street riots and other means at the same time. Coupled with international political and economic sanctions, 'mutual destruction' would be achieved, causing deep suffering to members of the public.

â€‹"It is clear from the reasons for sentencing handed down by the court that the defendants, led by Tai Yiu-ting, have invested a great deal of time and money in premeditating and planning the so-called 'primary election',

which showed that they had a long-term plan to make the scheme a success. As such, the court rejected the proposition of the defence that the scheme was bound to fail as a mitigation reason. Tai Yiu-ting was the initiator of the whole scheme and the '10 steps to mutual destruction' he put forward advocated revolution in substance. Besides, all the defendants who participated in the so-called 'primary election' played an essential role in the whole scheme.

â€‹"Regarding the sentence of individual defendants, the Department of Justice would study the reasons for sentencing in detail and consider whether a review application to the Court of Appeal regarding the sentence will be filed.

â€‹"The HKSAR Government has noticed that the United States and some Western countries, anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians and foreign media have recently made malicious attacks and smears on various cases. The HKSAR Government has stated on many occasions that like all cases, this case was handled strictly on the basis of evidence and in accordance with the law. All defendants received a fair trial strictly in accordance with laws applicable to Hong Kong and as protected by the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights, free from any interference."

â€‹The spokesman emphasised, "Safeguarding national security is the inherent responsibility of every citizen. The HKSAR Government is resolutely determined to crack down on acts and activities that endanger national safety, ensuring that laws are observed and strictly enforced, so as to bring offenders to account. We must remain vigilant at all times against national security risks, which can arise suddenly. We should not forget the pain even though the wound has been healed, nor should we rip apart the old wounds. We must not let Hong Kong suffer from such unforgettable pain again. Only with a safe and stable environment in Hong Kong can we focus on pursuing economic growth, advancing development, improving people's livelihoods and bringing fulfilment to the people."