

Secretary for Justice on constitutional reform

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, after attending the Kwai Tsing District Council meeting today (March 12):

Reporter: You said the Government is considering a referendum, but what are the areas of consideration and do you think that it would help the Government to understand better what Hong Kong people really, truly want?

Secretary for Justice: If I remember correctly, I didn't say the Government is considering a referendum. In fact, I said the opposite. I said under the Basic Law, there is no provision for a referendum. And also because Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region (SAR), therefore there is no legal basis for us to have a referendum. And also I would have thought that you would remember we have on many occasions emphasised that in the context of constitutional development, we would have to consider the wishes of various stakeholders, including the people of Hong Kong, the Government of the Hong Kong SAR, the Central People's Government's will on this matter, as well as, of course, the wills of the members of the Legislative Council. So we need to take into account these major four groups of stakeholders. And therefore using a referendum, of course, you may say can reflect the wish and the will of the people of Hong Kong, but for the reasons which I have outlined earlier, a referendum has no legal basis and no place in Hong Kong. But that is different from other surveys which may gauge the views of the general public. And indeed, in the past couple of months, as we have been emphasising, the members of the Legislative Council when they eventually cast their votes in June or July later this year, I would urge them to listen to the wills of the people of Hong Kong and as far as we know, the will of the people of Hong Kong right now is to go forward, take one step forward, so that we can have universal suffrage in the year 2017.

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

Ends/Thursday, March 12, 2015