

Secretary for Justice on universal suffrage

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, after attending a web television programme:

Reporter: Zhang Rongshun has refused to promise Hong Kong people that further changes can be made. Should Hong Kong people be worried? You know, it's just a promise. Maybe we could have universal suffrage in 2017.

Secretary for Justice: If I may clarify from the very beginning. He has not refused to make any promise in the sense that he is denying the possibility of changes after 2017. If you look at the flow of his conversation or his deliberation, what he said is as a matter of law, changes can be allowed after 2017 if one can achieve universal suffrage in 2017. So he began by saying even without any changes to the law, changes can be made after universal suffrage if achieved in 2017. That is the biggest premise and the very first point that he made. What he is saying is because the law already allows you to have further changes, further improvements after 2017, therefore there is no need for any guarantee as such, or guarantee, in quotation marks, as suggested by some sectors or some people in the community. But as I was answering a similar question in Cantonese, one can also distinguish between a guarantee, a promise which may have other ramifications, such as a legal ramification. I think we can still consider whether there can be any other form of explanation by the appropriate authority, whether in Hong Kong or in the Central People's Government, so as to officially make it clear what Mr Zhang said yesterday as his first point. In other words, whether we can have some form of further explanation by certain officials that in so far as we can have paragraph 7 of Annex 1 of the Basic Law remaining in our Basic Law or as part of our Basic Law, then one can still go further or have such revision as one may think fits, after 2017, after we have implemented universal suffrage. If

I may sum up, I don't think what Mr Zhang said yesterday should cause any alarm or concern on the part of the people of Hong Kong. What he is saying, if I may repeat, is that in law, one may change after 2017 as the matter now stands. Secondly, there is no need for a guarantee as such because the law already allows you to do so. But I don't think anyone is excluding the possibility that we can have further explanation in that regard. The most important point, if I may stress again, is he is saying that it is very clear, if not crystal clear term that the existing law allows you to have further changes, further improvements after 2017. I think that is the crux and most important point that he made yesterday.

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

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