

COMMENTHK

National security education requires positive messaging

Grenville Cross says while the anti-China forces have become depleted and more cunning, they are still lurking in the shadows



When the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) enacted the National Security Law of the People's Republic of China in 2015, Article 14 stipulated that, henceforth, April 15 would be the National Security Education Day (NSED). Its purpose was to publicize and promote the idea of holistic national security, and this has taken place annually ever since.

Once the Hong Kong SAR National Security Law (NSL) was enacted on June 30, 2020, it was decided that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would hold its own annual NSED, also on April 15. The first NSED was hosted by the Committee for Safeguarding National Security at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) on April 15, 2021. It aimed to “enhance the national security awareness of all Hong Kong citizens, create a strong atmosphere for safeguarding national security, and enhance the ability to prevent and resist security risks”.

Although the NSED highlights and spurs educational efforts, those initiatives are ongoing throughout the year at various levels. For example, the Endeavour Education Centre, whose management committee is chaired by the former Legislative Council president, Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai, is contracted by the HKSAR government to enhance young people's understanding of the nation and its security. It hosts training sessions commissioned by the Education Bureau on the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the city's two national security laws. The training sessions are designed to equip teachers, principals, and school management committee members with a better understanding of these issues, which they can then share with students.

Also operating, often under the radar, are the teachers trained by the Department of Justice to become “ambassadors.” They are responsible for promoting an understanding of the legal system and the rule of law in the schools on a regular basis (including arranging patriotic activities). They belong to a new initiative called the Rule of Law Education (ROLE) Stars Train-the-Leaders Program. By March, 40 ROLE ambassadors had undergone training on the Basic Law, the Constitution, and national security legislation. In turn, ROLE ambassadors are supported by student ambassadors, who, under the guidance of educational authorities, promote patriotic values among their peers.

Indeed, the NSL imposes a constitutional responsibility on the SAR to safeguard national security and to conduct national security education to enhance awareness among Hong Kong residents. On Wednesday, the opening ceremony for the sixth NSED was held at the HKCEC. Like its predecessors, it focused on public awareness and national identity.

At the opening ceremony, Xia Baolong, director of



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the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, urged everyone to remain alert to security risks that affect the SAR's prosperity and stability. The risks could come from internal or external actors, and geopolitical dangers had to be safeguarded against. Security was not only the cornerstone of the city's prosperity and stability but the foundation of its development.

The NSL and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO) of 2024 are still new laws, and are being gradually bedded down. Although foreign critics have sought to demonize them, they are largely aligned with national security laws in other jurisdictions. Once residents understand them, they will enjoy public acceptance, which is important for any law in a free society. If people appreciate the rationale and necessity of the two laws, they will recognize foreign propaganda for what it is. This was acknowledged by the NPCSC from the outset, which is why the NSL requires the SAR to “take necessary measures to strengthen public communication, guidance, supervision and regulation over matters concerning national security” (Art 9).

What people should appreciate is that their welfare, including livelihoods, depends on a stable environment. In other words, their prosperity depends on national security. When the insurrection broke out in 2019, the economy took a massive hit, with jobs being lost and businesses collapsing. This is undoubtedly why the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) emphasizes development and security, with safeguarding national security as imperative under the “one country, two systems” policy.

Although some have suggested there is a surfeit of national security education, this misses the point. Far from being overkill, the existing arrangements are essential if the SAR's capitalist system and way of life (guaranteed under the Basic Law) are to endure. Threats are ever-present, some subtle, and no sector can count itself immune. Risks exist throughout society, and every feasible measure must be taken to eliminate weaknesses in the SAR's defensive armor. And in this regard the SAR is fortunate to have a listening government. If people on the ground, including teachers, white-collar workers, and professionals, become aware of emerging dangers, the authorities will welcome any alerts they can provide.

As anybody who lived through the insurrection of 2019-20 will recall, there are no lengths to which

those who wish China ill are not prepared to go. In their determination to harm the country, they (and their foreign backers) had no compunction in trying to wreck the SAR. Although those days are gone, hopefully forever, there is no room for complacency. While depleted and more cunning, the anti-China forces are still lurking in the shadows. They could mobilize at any time, either of their own volition or, as in 2019, upon instruction from afar. They are always seeking opportunities to create mayhem and stoke tensions (through soft resistance, false narratives or otherwise), and constant vigilance is unavoidable.

The NSED 2026 was heavily influenced by the white paper on safeguarding national security under the “one country, two systems” framework, issued by the State Council Information Office (Feb 10). Although it emphasized that security is the foundation of social stability and the safeguard of people's well-being, there was much more to it.

The white paper contained positive messages that should be highlighted by everyone involved in promoting national security education in future. It stressed the importance of respecting human rights when safeguarding national security and noted that excessive zeal by law enforcers could be counter-productive. A balance between security and rights is required, and the SAR is achieving it. If people understand that their basic rights (including the right to a fair trial) are unaffected by the enactment of the national security laws, this will undoubtedly allay the concerns that some harbor (and silence the critics).

The white paper will be greatly welcomed by everybody who values the rule of law, underpinned as it is by an independent Judiciary. It states unequivocally that “Hong Kong will continue to employ judges and other judicial professionals from other common law areas, and its Court of Final Appeal will continue to invite such judges to participate in trials as needed”. Moreover, lawyers from elsewhere would continue to practice law in Hong Kong, and the “lawful rights and interests of investors from all countries and regions will continue to receive equal protection”. In other words, there will be no changes in the SAR's legal arrangements going forward, which is as welcome a message as can be imagined.

If, moreover, residents appreciate that the national security laws are being applied with great restraint, this will also be reassuring. For example, as of March 1, only 206 individuals and six companies had been prosecuted for national security offenses since 2020. In a population of approximately 7.5 million people, this figure is minuscule and shows that prosecution, contrary to foreign claims, is being used as a tool of last resort.

However, as in other jurisdictions, national security is a work in progress. The legislation must be comprehensive and requires regular updating. Nothing would give China's antagonists greater satisfaction than seeing the SAR putting its feet up on the national security front, or hearing it say “job done”.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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Hosting mega-science conference will burnish HK's intl events role

The Asia-Pacific Regional International Astronomical Union Meeting (APRIM) will take place in Hong Kong from May 4 to 8. Hundreds of leading astrophysicists, space scientists, engineers, and policymakers from around the world will gather to discuss everything from black holes and exoplanets to satellites and space sustainability — an area where Hong Kong could well become a global hub. This is the first time Hong Kong has hosted APRIM, and it is a big deal. However, organizers have been struggling to secure the sponsorship and institutional backing this event's caliber deserves. This is as perplexing as it is concerning.

When APRIM was held in Japan in 2023, it enjoyed high-level political support. The last time an International Astronomical Union (IAU) meeting of a similar scale took place in China was its general assembly in 2012 in Beijing, which was opened by then-vice-president Xi Jinping, underscoring the importance the country attaches to it, a lesson the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would do well to emulate. Indeed, five Nobel and Shaw prize laureates are plenary speakers for Hong Kong, an unprecedented achievement compared to any past APRIM.

So why is it proving so difficult to mobilize support for this mega event? Something is amiss. Hong Kong can easily fill stadiums for rugby, soccer, and concerts. We host world-class trade fairs, international conferences, business and fintech conferences, attracting ministers and prominent CEOs. The HKSAR government is on board, pitching Hong Kong as a global “events capital”. But there is a gap in this portfolio. That is as a host city for global mega-science events.

APRIM is the opportunity to stake our claim. The IAU is the preeminent body in astrophysics and space science. Its regional meetings are not just academic conferences; they are strategic gatherings where scientific priorities are set, collaborations forged, large-scale projects conceived, and the implications of astrophysics and space science for wider society — including technology, education, climate, and even finance — are debated. The exhibition halls can be crowded with scientific, technical, academic, institutional, educational, and commercial aerospace booths open to the public. These offer fantastic outreach opportunities for customers, ideas, and collaborations from the delegates themselves. Even here, interest is sluggish.

Hosting APRIM signals Hong Kong is more than just somewhere to trade stocks, buy luxury goods, watch world-class sport, and be blown away by the latest pop sensation. It strikes at the heart of a higher-brow vision. We can be a place where scientific conversations take place at the highest levels, where young people can see themselves reflected in an important, global scientific enterprise, and where we contribute intellectual as well as financial capital to the Asia-Pacific. This is consistent with the government's drive to transform Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology hub, while deepening the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area's integration and carving out a role in emerging areas such as the NewSpace economy and space sustainability.

So why is there a struggle to acquire sponsorship? First, astrophysics and space science remain poorly understood locally in economic and strategic terms. This is slowly changing, given Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu's Policy Address and the recent 2026-27 Budget statement. Nevertheless, sponsors see brand value only in sports and concerts, and in immediate commercial returns. The link to astrophysics and space science is less obvious. Yet space underpins the modern economy through satellite navigation, communications, and Earth observation for finance, insurance, and environmental monitoring. These rest on the same foundations that APRIM will be showcasing.

Second, there is a perception that science conferences are inward-facing and have limited public or media relevance. Sponsors worry that their support will “vanish into seminar rooms”. That is a failure of imagination and communication, not an inherent event property and especially one based on astrophysics and space science that can grab public interest like few other sciences.

Third, we lack sufficient high-level political and institutional “champions” who can advocate and support. When more senior leaders put their weight behind a science event, as happened effectively in Beijing in 2012, it sends a powerful signal to the corporate sector and public that this is not just “for professors” but a matter of national and regional strategic importance.

Sponsors and the government may ask, “What's in it for us and Hong Kong?” We must explain value in language that sponsors can relate to. For innovation and technology, APRIM will plant a scientific flag in Hong Kong, complementing investments in AI, biotech and fintech. It brings in people who shape the next generation of telescopes, satellites and data-driven instruments that feed the NewSpace economy. Thousands of local students can be inspired through public lectures, school visits, and open days linked to APRIM. Sponsors can brand scholarships, competitions, and outreach programs that live on long after the conference closes. For business and finance, space sustainability is a key theme that aligns with Hong Kong's environmental, social and governance ambitions. Issues like orbital debris, collision risk, and resilient infrastructure are increasingly material to insurers, asset managers, and infrastructure investors. Hong Kong can be a hub not just for space financing but for legal, regulatory and data standards governing the use of the space environment for all. Finally, let us consider soft power and branding. Hosting APRIM puts Hong Kong on the global map of science, showing that we are serious about ideas, discovery, and long-term thinking.

So the window is narrow but not shut tight. I call upon Hong Kong's leaders and benefactors. We did not become a world city by thinking small or short-term. We built our reputation on being agile, outward-looking, and willing to back bold ideas. APRIM 2026 is one of those ideas, a chance to expand the scope for the city's mega events.

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NEW BLUEPRINT | HONG KONG SAR

Executive-legislative collaborative model crucial to SAR

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is formulating its first ever five-year development blueprint — a plan that marks a historic milestone. This is more than a policy document; it is a declaration of intent — a moment in which Hong Kong's long-term vision moves in synchrony with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30).

At the heart of this transformation lies a new executive-legislative collaborative mechanism — a framework jointly created by the executive branch and the Legislative Council (LegCo) of the HKSAR. Through this platform, both sides are conducting in-depth consultations across six key priority areas, including finance, innovation and technology (I&T), and the Northern Metropolis. The shift is profound: It takes Hong Kong beyond the traditional approach of “the executive proposes, the legislature reviews” toward a forward-looking model of “co-creation from the very beginning”.

As one of the LegCo members taking part in this process, I have the privilege of seeing firsthand how collaboration — when built on trust and shared purpose — can generate synergy far greater than the sum of its parts.

We contribute three distinct strengths to this partnership.

First, ensuring Hong Kong's five-year plan resonates with national priorities by harmonizing it with the 15th Five-Year Plan's strategic pillars — from consolidating the city's position as an international financial center to building a world-class hub for innovation and technology.

Second, bridging between the government and industry by translating the knowledge and insights of Hong Kong's financial, technological, and business sectors into actionable policy proposals. For example, in recent financial consultations, we drew directly upon



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suggestions from the asset management community — advocating smoother cross-border investment mechanisms that align with the country's financial opening-up, while addressing longstanding issues such as small and medium-sized enterprises' access to capital.

Third, amplifying voices from the grassroots. The five-year plan must not be a top-down directive but a living framework that responds to people's everyday needs — from housing supply and transport connectivity to elderly care and youth development.

But to truly achieve the formula of “1 + 1 > 2”, collaboration must go beyond planning to encompass execution and oversight. The promise of co-creation lies not merely in drafting a strong plan, but in ensuring its effective delivery.

This calls for structured and sustained dialogue between the executive and legislature throughout the five-year cycle — regular progress reviews, timely legislative support for priority programs, and constructive oversight to identify and resolve implementation challenges early on. It equally demands a break from siloed, department-by-department policymaking, particularly for cross-cutting strategic initiatives such as the Northern Metropolis. Success in these areas

requires genuine coordination, aligning land use, infrastructure, housing, and economic development under a unified strategy.

Far from diluting the mechanism of “coordination with checks and balances” under the executive-led governance system, this new collaborative model refines it. The legislature's constitutional responsibility of scrutiny remains intact; what changes is the spirit in which that scrutiny is exercised. Instead of reacting after the fact, legislators can now identify risks and policy gaps at an early stage, strengthening accountability and preventing potential pitfalls before they emerge. This is constructive oversight at its best — one that enhances, rather than obstructs, the quality of governance.

This, in essence, is the practical meaning of “patriots administering Hong Kong” — an executive and a legislature working in harmony, not in confrontation, to serve the best interests of Hong Kong society.

The first five-year plan is far more than a development road map. It is a statement of purpose — of Hong Kong's commitment to integrate more deeply into national development while preserving its own unique advantages.

At its core, the administrative-legislative collaborative mechanism provides the foundation for that success. Through co-creation, aligned vision, and a steadfast focus on public needs, we can ensure that the five-year plan not only envisions a brighter future but also brings it to fruition. In doing so, Hong Kong will once again demonstrate that when different forces unite behind a shared goal, the outcome is not simply additive, but transformative — a true embodiment of “1 + 1 is greater than 2”.

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