

# Government strongly condemns rioters breaching public peace

Rioters conducted violent and illegal acts during and after the public procession on Hong Kong Island yesterday (January 1) and some people blatantly launched personal attacks and insults against a judge. A Government spokesman strongly condemns the acts. Police will take follow-up actions seriously in accordance with the law.

The spokesman said that judicial independence is an essential element of the rule of law as well as the cornerstone of Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. Everyone is equal before the law. The courts and judges deal with cases in accordance with the law and the relevant facts and evidence. All along, Hong Kong people respect the courts, judges and judicial proceedings, and do not accept that anyone exerts pressure in any form on the judges or the courts even if they hold different views on the judgments. This is the beauty of the rule of law in Hong Kong. Some rioters defaced the High Court during the procession yesterday once again, and even launched personal attacks on a specific judge. Society would in no way condone the act which would gravely undermine the rule of law in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government strongly condemns the acts.

The spokesman said the public procession on Hong Kong Island yesterday was generally smooth and orderly at the beginning, but it is regrettable that some rioters took the opportunity to block roads, trash traffic lights, hurl bricks and petrol bombs as well as set fire in various places and vandalise a number of banks and shops, posing a danger to people at the scene. The police, taking into consideration public safety, had to end the procession early and subsequently used appropriate and minimum force to disperse the rioters and make arrests.

The spokesman said it is worrying that rioters invariably took the peaceful participants of processions as their cover and conducted illegal and violent acts during or after the processions. While the HKSAR Government respects the peaceful expression of views by members of the public, it appeals to the people not to give tacit approval to or condone any violence in order not to encourage rioters' bad deeds. Procession participants should also stay away from rioters in order not to disrupt the enforcement of law by the police.

On the waving of flags advocating Hong Kong independence by some rally organisations and participants, the spokesman strongly condemns such acts, which are against the constitutional order of Hong Kong and the overall and long-term interest of Hong Kong society.

The spokesman pointed out that "One Country, Two Systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy are the established basic policies of the People's Republic of China (PRC) regarding Hong Kong. Advocating Hong Kong independence is inconsistent with the

constitutional and legal status of the HKSAR as stipulated in the Basic Law. Article 1 of the Basic Law points out that the HKSAR is an inalienable part of the PRC. Article 12 of the Basic Law states that the HKSAR shall be a local administrative region of the PRC, which shall enjoy a high degree of autonomy and come directly under the Central People's Government.

The spokesman also noted that some procession participants waved the flags of foreign countries. The spokesman said the HKSAR Government rejects the interference by foreign countries in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR. Members of the public should not encourage foreign countries to do so.

The spokesman stressed that the HKSAR Government will not turn a blind eye to any unconstitutional acts. Members of the public should treasure Hong Kong's unique advantages under "One Country, Two Systems" and should not do anything that would hurt the feelings of the Chinese people.