

# Government will not tolerate any harassment against judges

In light of the persistent harassment against a judge while handling court cases, the Department of Justice issued the following statement today (July 8):

Article 85 of the Basic Law stipulates, "The courts of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) shall exercise judicial power independently, free from any interference." The HKSAR Government will not tolerate any act of harassment against judges while performing their judicial duties. If there is any attempt to exert influence over court proceedings through despicable means, the HKSAR Government will spare no effort in bringing the culprit to justice in order to safeguard the due administration of the judicial process and public peace.

Acts of harassment may constitute criminal offences. Under section 24 of the Crimes Ordinance, anyone who threatens any other person with injury to him or her shall be guilty of an offence. Section 20(c) of the Summary Offences Ordinance points out that any person persistently making telephone calls without reasonable cause and for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to any other person commits a crime. Such acts may also be seen as perverting the course of justice. If an act creates a real risk of prejudice to court proceedings in that the public confidence in the due administration of justice is undermined, it may amount to contempt of court. These are serious offences that may attract a maximum sentence up to seven years' imprisonment.

Any acts of harassment, personal attacks, insults and even threats against judges would severely undermine the authority of the courts and damage public confidence in the judicial system. It is disgraceful to disrupt social order maliciously with an attempt to interfere with court proceedings. Offenders not only act in blatant defiance of the law and undermine the rule of law, but also break the law and must bear severe legal consequences.