

Improper remarks on sentences meted out by court condemned

The Department of Justice issued the following statement today (May 7) in response to some improper remarks on sentences meted out by the District Court on May 6.

We take exception to the ridiculous remarks made by certain individuals. The four defendants in the case pleaded guilty to a charge under the Public Order Ordinance for knowingly taking part in an unauthorised assembly. The laws of Hong Kong respect and protect the rights and freedoms as provided for under the Basic Law. However, it has been held that such rights and freedoms are not absolute and may be subject to restrictions which are, amongst others, in the interests of public order (ordre public) and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

In imposing the sentences, the judge stated the sentencing principles in open court. With due process observed, there is a well-established and fair appeal mechanism whereby any dissatisfaction over the sentences ought to be taken up by means of an appeal. Any absurd demand for their immediate release not only disrespects the rule of law but is also seen as an attempt to meddle in Hong Kong's affairs.

Members of the public should refrain from making any unsubstantiated accusations against the judicial and legal systems. Also, no one should comment arbitrarily on cases in respect of which legal proceedings are ongoing as the matter is sub judice.