

Judiciary enhances security in court buildings

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (November 24) expressed grave concerns about the recent repeated incidents involving intimidations against Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs). The cases have been reported to the Police.

The Judiciary reiterated that attempts to exert improper pressure on JJOs represent a direct challenge to the rule of law and the principle of judicial independence. They must be severely condemned.

As stated in express terms in the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) enjoys independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication. The courts of the HKSAR shall exercise judicial power independently, free from any interference.

The Judiciary reiterated that, according to the judicial oath, JJOs must handle cases in accordance with the law to ensure the due administration of justice, safeguard the law and administer justice without fear or favour, self-interest or deceit. JJOs must decide cases fearlessly, independently and professionally in accordance with the law and legal principles, regardless of whether they involve controversial laws or social events, or whether the outcomes are popular or likely to attract criticisms. Those who are dissatisfied with the verdict or sentence may seek an appeal under the existing mechanism.

The Judiciary has been constantly reviewing security measures for court buildings with a view to ensuring the safety of JJOs, staff of the Judiciary and other court users. Security screening has been put in place at the Court of Final Appeal Building, those floors with courtrooms at the High Court Building, the Family Court and the Small Claims Tribunal. By the end of this year, security screening will be extended to the West Kowloon Law Courts Building.

In light of recent incidents involving suspicious postal items, the Judiciary has taken a host of additional measures to step up the security in court premises:

1. Enlisting the assistance of the Hongkong Post to screen postal items addressed to court buildings before delivery with a view to reporting suspicious postal items to the Police for prompt handling;
2. Setting up designated outdoor checkpoints for postal items at suitable locations of court buildings to minimise the impact of suspicious mail on court security and court operations;
3. Enhancing police and security support for court buildings; and

4. Reminding staff and security personnel to stay vigilant to ensure a timely response to security incidents.

To safeguard the security of court buildings, the Judiciary will continue to review court security measures from time to time.