

Transcript of remarks by Secretary for Justice at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, at a media session at the Legislative Council Complex today (January 20):

Reporter: Regarding David Perry's withdrawal from being a prosecutor in a protest-related case, could you tell us why specifically he had chosen not to take the case? And also, what do you make of the statement made by the British Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, saying that it was "pretty mercenary" of Mr Perry to be taking up the case to prosecute pro-democracy activists? And also, are you worried that it may become more and more difficult for the Government to hire foreign lawyers, for example, British lawyers, to come to Hong Kong to take cases in Hong Kong?

Secretary for Justice: We have very good lawyers in Hong Kong who usually can handle a lot of very difficult cases. But for this particular one as stated in the judgment of Justice Poon, this is a very complicated and difficult case, and also with the view that the laws in Hong Kong may be further developed, we have decided and it was approved by the judge for us to engage an outside counsel, Mr David Perry, who of course is one of the top silks, a very formidable silk from London. The reason his engagement is terminated, I wouldn't quite like to use the way you described, shall we just use it objectively as we said in the press statement, he has expressed concerns about the pressures that we have seen in media, in the United Kingdom community from all sides, and also the question about the quarantine that we have here in Hong Kong. And for those reasons, he has told us and indicated that we should proceed on schedule without him. That is what we are doing and that is exactly how it has happened.

As to the comments on what another foreign very high-ranking official has said, I would like to react in this way: the Bar in the UK and in Hong Kong take pride in our independence of the Bar and take pride in our cab-rank rule. The cab-rank rule is one of the very fundamental principles of the independence of the Bar that gives a strong and independent legal sector, which of course, is also conducive to a strong and independent judiciary. We respect the situation that we are now facing and the fact that certain very high-ranking officials have uttered words such as "mercenary" is, with respect, disgraceful, to such a reputable counsel.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)