

HKSAR Government strongly opposes interference by foreign government in court case involving Lai Chee-ying

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on January 10 strongly opposed interference by a foreign government in a court case involving Lai Chee-ying and the false allegation and criticism against the HKSAR Government.

According to media reports, Lai Chee-ying's purported "international legal team" have earlier requested, in a letter to the UK Prime Minister, an urgent meeting to discuss potential ways to secure the release of Lai, who is being remanded in custody pending trial. It is also reported that the UK Minister of State (Indo-Pacific), Anne-Marie Trevelyan, had on January 10 met Lai's "legal team" upon request. Apart from admitting that the authority had been providing support to Lai, they also falsely alleged that the HKSAR Government targeted certain persons including Lai.

The HKSAR Government opposes and condemns these acts of the aforementioned purported "international legal team" and the UK Government which attempted to undermine the rule of law of Hong Kong and interfere with the independent exercise of judicial power in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government strongly urges the relevant parties to respect the spirit of the rule of law and stop interfering with the internal affairs of the HKSAR.

That Hong Kong is a society underpinned by the rule of law and has always adhered to the principle that "laws must be obeyed and lawbreakers be held accountable" is well recognised by international communities. The Department of Justice (DoJ) of the HKSAR, by virtue of Article 63 of the Basic Law, controls criminal prosecutions, free from any interference. Independent prosecutorial decision for each case is made in a rigorous and objective manner, strictly based on evidence and applicable laws and in accordance with the Prosecution Code. Prosecutions would be instituted by the DoJ only if there is sufficient admissible evidence to support a reasonable prospect of conviction and if it is in the public interest to do so.

As guaranteed by the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights, defendants charged with criminal offences will undergo fair trials by the Judiciary exercising judicial power independently. Article 85 of the Basic Law clearly stipulates that the courts of the HKSAR shall exercise judicial power independently, free from any

interference.

Article 25 of the Basic Law also provides that all Hong Kong residents shall be equal before the law. Cases will never be handled any differently owing to the profession, political beliefs or background of the persons involved. In all criminal trials, the prosecution has to prove beyond reasonable doubt before the defendant can be convicted, and the defendant has the right to appeal under the law.

Hong Kong judicial system has always been highly regarded by the international communities. Any country, organisation, or individual attempting to interfere with judicial proceedings before the HKSAR courts with political power, or any defendant attempting to seek help from and collude with foreign political power to evade criminal justice process is a blatant act undermining the rule of law of Hong Kong and interfering with the HKSAR's internal affairs. Such acts by a defendant highly likely constitute contempt of court.

We will never tolerate, and strongly deplore, any form of interference by any foreign power or individual with the judicial proceedings and internal affairs of the HKSAR.

Ends/Wednesday, January 11, 2023