

16 December 2014

Letter from Director-General – Updates on Hong Kong

Dear Friends,

You may have seen on the news that the protest zones in Hong Kong have all been cleared as of December 15. This brought an end to the illegal occupation and blockage of major thoroughfares on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon that started on September 28.

The clearance operations on Hong Kong Island on December 11 and 15 were generally peaceful and uneventful. However, quite a number of people refused to leave the two sites at Admiralty and Causeway Bay despite repeated advice and warnings from the Police. A total of 266 people were arrested for offences of unlawful assembly or obstructing police. Those arrested did not resist when being removed by Police and the operation went smoothly. Those arrested have all been released, pending consideration of whether charges should be laid in accordance with the law. The police enforcement actions were professional and restrained in restoring public order and protecting the rights of all citizens to use the roads. The clearance operations were highly transparent, widely covered by the media and observed by members of the Independent Police Complaints Council, a statutory body responsible for monitoring the handling and investigation of complaints against police.

Traffic has since been running smoothly in the two areas. Police have stated they will take resolute action to prevent any attempt to block roads in future.

The protests have had a serious impact on certain sectors of the economy and businesses, including the loss of revenue and jobs. We remain confident that the adverse effects can be overcome in time, and that Hong Kong will bounce back with its trademark resilience.

The protests have highlighted a number of issues including constitutional reform, housing affordability, social mobility and youth expectations. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is determined to sincerely address these issues, rebuild trust and heal the wounds caused by the conflict. We understand that although the protesters have left the main protest zone, the issues that prompted their actions require a robust response.

On constitutional reform, we have all along maintained that progress is only possible within the legal and constitutional framework, that is, the Basic Law, and the binding decisions of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the permanent body of the highest organ of state power of China. Some protesters insist on a constitutional reform model that is inconsistent with, or even falls outside, our legal and constitutional framework. As a society built on the rule of law, such attempts are neither possible nor practical. We hope that all sectors can understand that the HKSAR Government can only propose a constitutional development proposal that is legally and constitutionally sound.

In this regard, we shall soon launch the second stage consultation on the method for selecting the Chief Executive election by universal suffrage in 2017. We will urge all sectors – including those who took part in the protests – to give us their input and suggestions to achieve one-person, one-vote universal suffrage for the 2017 Chief Executive election. This will allow all five million eligible voters to elect the next Chief Executive, as compared to the current situation of electing the Chief Executive through a 1 200-member Election Committee. The HKSAR Government cannot do this on its own. We need the support of the public as well as a two-thirds majority of our legislators to effect constitutional reform. This is what the HKSAR Government will be working towards over the next several months.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and interest in Hong Kong. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can provide any more help or information.

May I also take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours sincerely,
Erica

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