

Rioters damage facilities of a bank at Wan Chai

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following message as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

At around 4pm today (January 1), rioters vandalised a bank at the junction of Hennessy Road and Luard Road, damaging facilities including glass door and automated teller machine.

Police officers are deploying the minimum necessary force to effect dispersal of protestors and have arrested 5 people for "criminal damage".

Police warn all lawbreakers to stop their unlawful acts.

HKSAR Government responds to January 1 procession

In response to the public procession on Hong Kong Island today (January 1), a Government spokesman said that the procession so far has been generally smooth and orderly, with the majority of the members of the public expressing their views in a lawful, peaceful and rational manner.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has all along respected people's rights and freedoms to participate in peaceful processions and assemblies and express views rationally, as these are the important core values cherished by Hong Kong people.

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The spokesman appealed to participants in the procession to disperse soon after it ends and not to take part in any illegal or violent acts that may occur. To safeguard the rule of law and public peace, the Police will enforce the law strictly.

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The spokesman said that the social unrest arising from opposition to the proposed legislative amendments has persisted for more than six months, and has caused negative impacts on Hong Kong's economy, and the daily living and commuting of citizens. Significant falls have also been registered in Gross Domestic Product figures, inbound visitor numbers and business receipts of

major service industries. The unemployment rate has also deteriorated significantly.

â€‹ To ease the burden brought by the economic downturn to small and medium-sized enterprises and members of the public, the HKSAR Government has rolled out four rounds of relief measures amounting to \$25 billion. The provision of an extra allowance amounting to one month of the standard rate Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payments, the Old Age Living Allowance, the Old Age Allowance, the Disability Allowance, the Working Family Allowance and the individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy will be disbursed as soon as possible before the Lunar New Year. This will benefit some 1.4 million people.

â€‹ The spokesman stressed that human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong – including freedom of speech, of the press, of publication and of assembly – are fully protected by the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other laws. Despite the social unrest in Hong Kong over the past six months, the HKSAR Government has all along upheld the core values of the rule of law and freedoms.

â€‹ Since the city's return to the Motherland, the HKSAR Government has been exercising "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy in strict accordance with the Basic Law. The "one country, two systems" principle has been fully and successfully implemented. "One country, two systems" is the best arrangement for maintaining Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability, and for making Hong Kong a favourable place to live and work. The HKSAR Government will continue to implement the "one country, two systems" principle resolutely in accordance with the Basic Law.

The HKSAR Government will spare no effort to tackle the problems arising from the saga. However, the top priority now is to stop violence and restore social order as soon as possible so that the daily lives of people and various business activities can return to the normal track.

â€‹ The HKSAR Government will also continue to humbly listen to members of the public and strengthen communications with the citizens and various social sectors. Apart from listening to public views through community dialogues, the Chief Executive and her governing team have been reaching out to members of the public through different means. These include district visits and holding in-depth dialogue sessions on policy matters and current social issues with people from various sectors. The Principal Officials will also continue to hold dialogues with netizens on social media platforms.

The spokesman said, "With the determination of the HKSAR Government, as well as the resilience and wisdom of Hong Kong people, we will certainly overcome these challenges and help Hong Kong regain momentum and forge ahead."

Exchange of notes for lai-see uses

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

As the Chinese New Year draws near, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the three note-issuing banks (The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited and Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited) today (January 1) announced that new notes and good-as-new notes in various denominations will be available for exchange at branches of the three note-issuing banks starting from January 14, to meet demand for notes as lai-see. The HKMA encourages the public to continue supporting the use of good-as-new notes. Good-as-new notes are perfectly suitable for use as lai-see, given that Hong Kong's currency notes are maintained at a high standard of cleanliness, and there will be abundant supply of good-as-new notes.

Concurrently, the 2018 Series HK\$20 and HK\$50 banknotes will be issued into circulation and available for exchange at branches of the three note-issuing banks. With the issuance of these new HK\$20 and HK\$50 banknotes, all the five denominations of the 2018 Series will be in circulation.

Update of a cluster of patients infected with Coronavirus OC43 in SLH

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with Coronavirus OC43 in a male ward for severe intellectual disability, the spokesperson for Siu Lam Hospital made the following update today (January 1):

One more 50-year-old patient in the ward had presented with respiratory symptoms. Appropriate viral tests had been arranged for the patient and the test result was positive to Coronavirus OC43. The patient concerned is being treated under isolation with stable condition. Coronavirus OC43 is a known human coronavirus, which usually causes mild respiratory infection such as common cold.

Admission to the ward has been suspended and restricted visiting has been imposed. Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward are under close surveillance.

The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the

Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow up.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Sha Tin

Police advise motorists that special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Sha Tin to facilitate the race meeting today (January 1).

The arrangements will come into effect two hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

Appropriate traffic signs will be put up and police will be on hand to guide motorists.

The Police also appeal to people going to Sha Tin Racecourse for the race meeting and to Happy Valley Racecourse for cross betting to make maximum use of public transport.

Parking spaces at the two racecourses are available only to holders of appropriate permits issued by Hong Kong Jockey Club and any vehicles illegally parked will be towed away.