

# Protests in Hong Kong despite ban by police



Riot police detaining people in Hong Kong as they patrolled the route of a banned anti-government march on Oct 1, 2020. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

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## Dozens arrested as Carrie Lam hails 'return to stability' on China's national day

HONG KONG • Hong Kong riot police patrolling the route of a banned anti-government march arrested dozens of people yesterday, stopping crowds from gathering as Chief Executive Carrie Lam hailed the city's "return to stability" at China's national day celebrations.

Police were seen rounding up more than 50 people downtown and binding their wrists with plexicuffs before putting them on buses. Police said in a Facebook post that they were looking for two men who threw petrol bombs to block traffic in another area of the city.

The protesters wanted to march against Beijing's imposition of a sweeping national security law and to demand the return of 12 Hong Kong people arrested at sea by the Chinese authorities as they tried to reach self-ruled Taiwan. Police had banned the protest, citing coronavirus-related restrictions.

Passers-by still broke into pro-democracy chants sporadically, but there was no sign of large crowds.

"It's China's national day but this is Hong Kong's death day," said Jay, a woman dressed in black, the city's protest attire. "We have to try and keep fighting for freedom."

Officers, in their hundreds, conducted stop-and-search activities. Among those ordered to leave were a teenager playing protest songs on a woodwind instrument, a man dressed in black and holding a yellow balloon - colours

associated with pro-democracy supporters – and a woman holding a copy of the Apple Daily anti-government tabloid.

Earlier in the day, Mrs Lam attended a flag raising ceremony with other senior Hong Kong and mainland officials in an exhibition centre surrounded by police and security barriers.

“Over the past three months, the plain truth is – and it is obvious to see – that stability has been restored to society while national security has been safeguarded, and our people can continue to enjoy their basic rights and freedoms,” Mrs Lam said.

Late on Wednesday, police said they had arrested five people for inciting participation in illegal assemblies online.

Anti-government protests, which often turned violent last year, have been smaller and fewer this year due to coronavirus restrictions on group gatherings and fears of arrest under the new security law.

The law punishes with up to life in prison anything that China sees as subversion, separatism, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

Four members of the League of Social Democrats, led by veteran activist “Long Hair” Leung Kwok Hung, marched holding a banner reading, “There is no national day celebration, only national mourning”. Groups of four are the largest allowed under Covid-19 rules.

China’s national day is resented by many democracy supporters, who say Beijing is eroding the wide-ranging liberties the former British colony was promised when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

For pro-Beijing supporters, it is an opportunity to drum up patriotism in China’s most restive city.

At the ceremony, Mrs Lam praised China’s success in curbing the coronavirus outbreak and its economic recovery, calling it “a rare bright spot” which “has shown once again the shift of the global economic focus from the West to the East.”

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