

HK protesters vandalize subway, mall

Written by Taipei Times

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A protester kicks away a tear gas canister as demonstrators and police clash outside a shopping mall in Hong Kong yesterday.

Photo: AP

Protesters yesterday smashed windows in a subway station and a shopping mall, and police made arrests across Hong Kong amid anger over a demonstrator's death and the arrest of pro-democracy lawmakers.

Hong Kong is in the sixth month of protests that began in June over a since-shelved extradition bill and have expanded to include demands for greater democracy and other grievances.

Authorities closed the subway station in Sha Tin District after protesters broke windows and damaged a ticket machine.

Reporters saw police arrest three men at a residential complex elsewhere in Sha Tin, but the reason was not clear.

In Tuen Mun, about three dozen people dressed in black, the symbolic color of the protests, stormed through the Citywalk shopping mall.

Most were peaceful, but one used a club to smash windows while others overturned tables in a restaurant.

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Spectators on the street outside shouted “Cockroaches!” at police.

In Tsuen Wan, police fired tear gas and took away four men and one woman suspected of vandalizing shops, the Apple Daily reported.

Inside the Festival Walk shopping mall in Kowloon Tong, reporters saw a man lying on a public walkway beside a small pool of blood, with police standing over him. His condition and the reason for possible injuries were unclear.

There were brief shoving matches between police and protesters, some of whom thrust their fists into the air in a gesture of defiance. Police pointed cans of pepper spray at onlookers and reporters.

Protesters are demanding the resignation of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥).

They mourned the death on Friday of university student Alex Chow (周梓樂), 22, who on Monday last week fell from a parking garage when police fired tear gas at protesters.

The circumstances of the death are unclear, but many accuse police of using heavy-handed tactics, including widespread use of tear gas and pepper spray.

Police denied pushing the student during the incident or delaying emergency treatment.

On Saturday, police announced the arrest of six lawmakers on charges of obstructing the local assembly during a raucous May 11 meeting over the extradition bill. All were freed on bail.

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Meanwhile, China said the lack of tough security laws in Hong Kong is a key reason for the increasingly violent demonstrations and that the enactment of such legislation is an “urgent task.”

The call came in a lengthy statement issued late on Saturday by the head of the Chinese government department that oversees Hong Kong.

The statement by Hong Kong Liaison Office Director Zhang Xiaoming (張曉明) acknowledged that governance in the territory must be improved, saying that factors such as high housing costs and a growing wealth gap had contributed to the unrest.

However, Zhang also backed a firmer hand, saying laws outlawing subversion and other challenges to Chinese central government control were needed, and stressed that the territory’s leader and legislature must be “patriots” loyal to Beijing.

Efforts by Hong Kong’s Beijing-controlled government to introduce tough security laws in 2003 caused major protests before being shelved.

The lack of such legislation “is one of the main reasons for the intensification of activities of local radical separatist forces,” Zhang said.

“The need to safeguard national security and strengthen law enforcement have become prominent issues and urgent tasks facing the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and people from all walks of life,” he said.

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