

## CROWDS PROTEST IN HK AFTER ACTIVISTS JAILED

**HONG KONG:** Thousands of supporters of three jailed young democracy activists took to the streets in Hong Kong yesterday to protest their sentences. Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow, leaders of the 2014 Umbrella Movement rallies, were sentenced to six to eight months in jail Thursday for their role in a protest that sparked the months-long demonstrations calling for democratic reforms.

People took on the summer heat to stream from the district of Wan Chai to the Court of Final appeal in the heart of Hong Kong Island, protesting the jail terms. They held signs including: "Give back hope to my children" and "One prisoner of conscience is one too many" as they gathered in one of the biggest recent rallies the city has seen.

William Cheung, an engineer in his 40s, described the ruling as "the beginning of white terror" in Hong Kong. "These young people are our hope for the future. We shouldn't treat them like this," Jackson Wai, a retired teacher in his 70s, told AFP as he teared up. Rights groups and activists called the case against the trio "political persecution" and more evidence that an assertive Beijing is tightening its grip on the semi-autonomous city.

The Beijing-backed Hong Kong government brought the case for harsher sentences against the three, saying previous non-custodial terms were too light and did not serve as a deterrent to activists undermining stability. University student Ann Lee said the government's efforts to overturn the previous sentences were "attempts to intimidate us from taking part in acts of resistance." Hong Kong enjoys freedoms unseen on the mainland after being handed back to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" deal, but there are growing fears Beijing is trampling the agreement.

### 'Ashcan of history'

The three jailed protest leaders were found guilty last year on unlawful assembly charges for storming a fenced-off government forecourt known as "Civic Square" as part of a protest calling for fully free leadership elections in September 2014. Wong and former legislator Law, who was disqualified from parliament last month following Beijing intervention, had expressed their intentions to run for office in future elections, but will be prevented from standing for five years because their jail terms exceeded three months.

Wally Yeung, one of the panel of three judges that handed down the jail terms, said in a written judgment there had been an "unhealthy trend" of people in Hong Kong breaking the law for the sake of their ideals and having what he described as "arrogant and self-righteous ideas". Protesters stayed on until the evening yesterday as campaigners addressed the crowds and messages of solidarity were projected onto the building of the Court of Final Appeal.

Veteran activist and former lawmaker "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung, who was ousted along with Nathan Law, said elite officials including the justice chief understood the 2014 mass protests differently from judges of lower courts, who adjudicated on everyday matters in society and had decided on lighter sentences for the protest leaders. "Those at the top—they are the ones who met with Xi Jinping during the July visit and were lectured by him," said Leung, referring to the high-profile visit last month where the Chinese President delivered a hardline message warning against challenges to China's control of Hong Kong. Lau Siu-lai, another unseated lawmaker, told supporters the court cases against activists in recent months sought to wear them out, bankrupt them and "push Hong Kong people into a state of heartbrokenness and giving up". —AFP



**UTTAR PRADESH:** Indian policemen and emergency crew stand next to the wreckage of a train carriage after an express train derailed on the evening of August 19 near the town of Khatauli. — AFP

## SEARCH ONGOING AFTER TRAIN CRASH CLAIMS AT LEAST 23 LIVES

### FOURTH ACCIDENT THIS YEAR ON THE CRUMBLING NETWORK

**NEW DELHI:** Emergency crews searched mangled carriages yesterday for any further victims after a train crash in northern India killed 23 passengers, the fourth major accident this year on the crumbling network. Another 156 people were injured when 14 carriages came off the tracks in Muzaffarnagar district in Uttar Pradesh state, 130 kilometers from New Delhi, on Saturday evening.

The coaches were left piled atop each other after the express train derailed at 100 kilometers per hour, crashing into nearby houses and a college. Rescuers used gas-powered saws yesterday to pull apart the tangled metal and search the wreckage with sniffer dogs. "We are checking the coaches thoroughly for any survivors or bodies," Anant Dev, Muzaffarnagar district police chief, told AFP.

A large crowd gathered at the accident site to help free passengers from the damaged carriages, many of which were upended and torn open. Some of the injured were seriously hurt but many had been released from hospital after receiving treatment, Dev added. The government has ordered an inquiry into the accident amid speculation unscheduled maintenance work was underway at the time.

Mohammad Jamshed, a senior official with the government's railway board, said some repair equipment was found near the accident site-indicating work was being carried out. But he cautioned that the evidence was inconclusive and a thorough probe would unveil the exact cause of the crash. "The investigation will deal with all the aspects, be it technical, human error or sabotage," Jamshed told reporters. Railways Minister Suresh Prabhu vowed in a Twitter message to "fix responsibility" for the crash. Authorities have also asked anti-terror officers to investigate whether sabotage was involved.

### 'Miracle'

The Utkal-Kalinga express left Puri, a temple city in India's coastal east, on Thursday evening and was scheduled to arrive in the northern Hindu holy city of Haridwar, a 2,400 kilometer journey. But survivors described sudden jolting followed by a violent crash near Khatauli railway station in Muzaffarnagar.

"There was a huge thud and a shake before I fell off the berth," Nadeem Shauket, who escaped with minor injuries, told AFP. "It's a miracle," he said of his survival virtually unscathed,

describing how hundreds of locals rushed to their rescue. Officials said 200 meters of track had been damaged in the accident, but it was hoped services would be restored by yesterday evening. India's railway network is the world's fourth largest and remains the main form of travel in the vast country, but it is poorly funded and deadly accidents often occur.

Experts blame under-investment and poor safety standards for the frequency of rail accidents. This latest derailment is the fourth major crash this year, and follows another accident in Uttar Pradesh last November that left 146 dead. In January nearly 40 people were killed when a passenger train derailed in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

A 2012 government report described the loss of 15,000 passengers to rail accidents every year in India as a "massacre". Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pledged \$137 billion over five years to modernize the crumbling railways and his government has signed numerous upgrading deals with private companies. Japan has agreed to provide \$12 billion in soft loans to build India's first bullet train, with Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe tipped to break ground on the project in September. —AFP



**HONG KONG:** A protester (C) holds a picture of Nathan Law, Joshua Wong and Alex Chow, the leaders of Hong Kong's 'Umbrella Movement', during a march to protest their sentencing at the High Court. — AFP

## YOUNG TAIWANESE CHOOSE CHINA JOBS OVER POLITICS

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan has long seen its international allies switching allegiance to an ascendant Beijing, but now there are also fears of a brain drain of the island's youth as they pursue careers in rival China. Cross-strait tensions have soared since China-sceptic Tsai Ing-wen took power last year, with Beijing cutting all official communication. China still sees the self-ruling island as part of its territory to be reunified, but

young people in particular have increasingly developed a sense of pride in their Taiwanese identity.

They have been at the forefront of anti-Beijing sentiment in recent years, famously occupying Taiwan's parliament in protest at trade deals with China in the Sunflower Movement of 2014. However, with monthly starting salaries for college graduates unchanged at below Tw\$30,000 (\$1,000) since the 1990s and property and consumer

prices spiralling upwards, some are now taking a more pragmatic approach.

China is also wooing young Taiwanese talent in what analysts say is a "soft power" push to sway political sentiment. Katherine Wang, 33, quit kindergarten teaching in Taipei and co-launched a business in May offering a variety of courses for young Chinese women in southeastern Xiamen city, saying she feels "hopeless" about Taiwan's economy. "I see a ray of hope in Xiamen and working there makes me happy. I want to make a name for myself and my partners and hopefully expand our business to all over China," she explained.

Wang receives free housing and office space as an incentive from the Xiamen city government, an example of the perks offered by provincial authorities, which also include generous grants. According to China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), over 6,000 Taiwanese young people are working or interning at more than 50 youth start-up bases launched since 2015.

Top Chinese political and business leaders, including Premier Li Keqiang and Alibaba founder Jack Ma, have also encouraged Taiwanese youth to chase careers in China. While Wang says she has no strong political views, others who do are putting them to one side for jobs. One twenty-something has opted to work in China even though he supports Taiwanese independence—a concept intolerable to Beijing.

"I just focus on how to do my job well," the young worker told AFP on condition of anonymity, saying he hoped it would be a stepping stone to an international career. "My Chinese colleagues sometimes say things like 'Taiwan is a part of China' but that's their freedom of speech," he said. Despite being a fully fledged democracy, Taiwan has never announced a formal split from China. Beijing has threatened military action if it ever did.

There are already well-established business links between China and Taiwan. Taiwanese manufacturers flocked to the mainland to take advantage of its resources and cheaper labor after restrictions were lifted in the late 1980s. China is also Taiwan's biggest trade partner and market, with exports there totaling \$112 billion — 40 percent of last year's total. But the youth links have an extra dimension, says Shih Cheng-feng, a political analyst at National Dong Hwa University. "China realises that it needs to take a soft approach and use 'carrots' to attract (young people) in the hope that they will have some impact at critical time, such as the presidential election," Shih told AFP. —AFP



**TAIPEI:** A woman introduces the jobs opening at Fujian province, southern China, during a jobs fair. —AFP

## MALAYSIA SORRY FOR SHOWING INDONESIA'S FLAG AS POLAND'S

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia apologized to Indonesia yesterday for an "unintentional" mistake in printing the Indonesian flag upside down in a souvenir guidebook for the Southeast Asian Games. The error made the red-and-white Indonesian flag resemble Poland's and caused anger in Indonesia, where "shameonyoumalaysia" has become the most popular hashtag on Twitter.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo demanded an apology for hurt national pride but also cautioned against exaggerating the incident with his neighbor. The two countries share the same religion and language but often trade accusations of stealing the other's food and culture.

Malaysian Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin met his Indonesian counterpart Imam Nahrawi to personally apologize. After a brief private meeting Sunday, the two ministers shook hands at a news conference. Khairy, who was quick to issue the first apology late Saturday on Twitter, said that the guidebooks will be corrected and

reprinted. Indonesia appears to have taken particular offense because the guidebook was distributed to VIPs at Saturday's opening ceremony in Kuala Lumpur for the 29th Southeast Asian Games and only its flag was shown incorrectly.

Nahrawi, who earlier described the error as "very painful," said he accepted the apology. "We hope these mistakes don't get repeated because flags are important symbols for each country and should be respected," he said. Khairy said the mistake was "unintentional and it happened due to our lessness." "This was a big, big mistake on behalf of the host, have contact. I, our apologies to ... Imam averyah Indonesian minister and also I apologize to the people of Indonesia for this mistake," he said.

The creation of Malaysia when the British empire was dismantled after World War II was bitterly opposed by Indonesia, itself then a new nation emerging from Dutch colonial rule and a short-lived Japanese occupation. — AP

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