

Hong Kong police vow to pursue protesters

Hong Kong, China

Hong Kong police yesterday vowed to pursue anti-government protesters who launched a 15-hour siege of their headquarters as historic rallies aimed at ousting the city's pro-Beijing leader evolve.

Thousands of largely young protesters surrounded the headquarters throughout Friday and into the small hours of Saturday morning, the latest manifestation of angry demonstrations roiling Hong Kong.

The international finance hub has been rocked by the worst political unrest since its 1997 handover to China.

Millions have marched this month to oppose a hugely unpopular proposed law that would have allowed extraditions to the Chinese mainland.

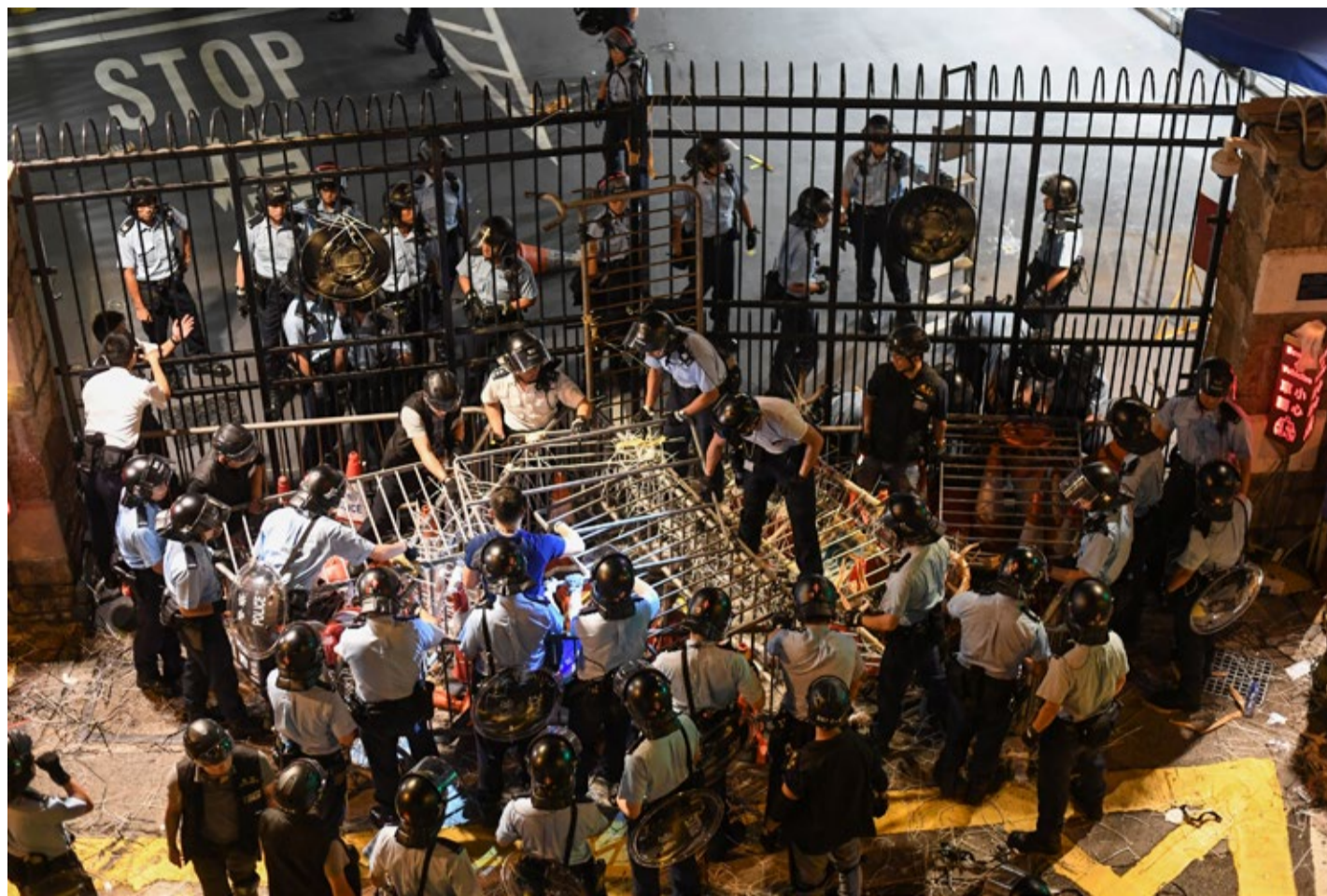
Officers also used tear gas and rubber bullets last week to clear protesters during another massive demonstration outside the city's parliament, fanning widespread anger at the police.

The spark for the current wave of protests was an attempt by chief executive Carrie Lam to pass the Beijing-backed extradition law, which she has now postponed following the huge public backlash.

But the demonstrations have morphed into a wider movement against Lam's administration and Beijing after years of sliding political freedoms.

Guerrilla protests

Protest leaders plan to hold another huge rally on July 1 but student-led groups -- communicating through encrypted messaging apps -- have begun em-



Police clear barricades which were set up by protesters outside the police headquarters in Hong Kong

bracing spontaneous, fast-moving acts of civil disobedience.

"We need to flow like water", one protester called Chris said, espousing a famous philosophy from martial arts superstar and Hong Kong legend Bruce Lee.

It was unclear if demonstrators would rally in large numbers for a third weekend, with the streets quiet and popular protest sites nearly devoid of people on Saturday.

Eric, a 22-year-old office worker and protester, said he

would wait to see what directions came through on social media in the coming days.

"There are many camps and each person has their own way of resistance," he told AFP.

During Friday's demonstrations outside police headquarters, large crowds of protesters blocked entrances, taped over CCTV cameras and shouted at police.

Many chanted "release the righteous" and "shame on police thugs" -- references to those detained during violence last week

between demonstrators and the police.

Opposition groups have demanded an investigation into allegations of police brutality and the release of those detained during the clashes.

Officers remained inside their fortified building throughout Friday.

The protest was noisy but peaceful -- with the exception of thrown eggs and demonstrators shining laser pens at the windows.

The crowds eventually dis-

persed in the early hours of Saturday some 15 hours after their demonstration began.

In a statement Saturday morning, police called the protest "illegal, irrational and unreasonable" saying it would "stringently follow up" on those behind the blockade.

Supporters were later seen handing flowers to officers.

"We are very angry, we think Hong Kong is a very peaceful place, we should express our ideas in a peaceful way," Tsoi Hak-hin, 52, said.

Police have defended using tear gas and rubber bullets on June 12 as a necessary and proportionate response to meet violent protesters who were trying to break into the city's parliament.

But rights group Amnesty International said Friday it had verified multiple instances of police violence that breached international laws while influential legal bodies in Hong Kong have backed an inquiry into police tactics.

Sliding freedoms

Although Hong Kong was returned from British to Chinese rule in 1997, it is still administered separately under an arrangement known as "one country, two systems".

The city enjoys freedoms unseen on the mainland but many residents have been alarmed in recent years by what they feel is a tighter grip by Beijing.

Hong Kong's leaders are not elected and calls for universal suffrage have fallen on deaf ears.

In 2014, pro-democracy protesters seized key intersections for two months but failed to win any concessions from Beijing.

Since then, many of that movement's leaders have been jailed while some Beijing critics have found themselves banned from politics or even disappearing into Chinese custody.

Opposition to the extradition bill managed to unite a wide cross section of Hong Kong.

Critics feared the law would ensnare both Hong Kongers and foreigners in mainland China's opaque and politicised justice system, and also give Beijing a tool to target critics based in the semi-autonomous territory.

Sri Lanka extends emergency in surprise move

Colombo

A state of emergency was extended by Sri Lanka's President yesterday, going back on pledges to relax the tough laws introduced after the Easter Sunday attacks that killed 258 people.

Maithripala Sirisena said in a decree he believed there was a "public emergency" in

the country, and was invoking provisions of the public security act extending the state of emergency. The tough laws, granting sweeping powers to police and security forces to arrest and detain suspects, were due to expire yesterday.

Just over 100 people, including 10 women, are in custody in connection with April's Easter Sunday suicide attacks.

Parents avoid UK jail after sending IS son money

London

The parents of a British Muslim convert dubbed "Jihadi Jack" were spared jail Friday after being convicted of funding terrorism by sending him money after he joined the Islamic State group.

Organic farmer John Letts, 58, and former charity fundraiser Sally Lane, 56, tried to send £1,723 (\$2,200, 1,900 euros) to

their son, despite multiple police warnings not to.

Prosecutor Alison Morgan said they had "turned a blind eye to the obvious": that their teenage son had joined the IS jihadist group in Syria.

Jurors at the Old Bailey in London, England's central criminal court, found the couple guilty of one count of funding terrorism in September 2015.

They were sentenced to 15

months in jail, but the sentence was suspended for 12 months.

A Canadian dual national through his father, Jack Letts left the family home aged 18 in May 2014 and embarked on what his parents saw as a "grand adventure" to learn Arabic in Jordan. From Jordan, he moved to Kuwait and got married in Iraq before travelling to Syria.

The parents, in statement read by their lawyer outside

court, said: "We have been convicted for doing what any parent would do if they thought that their child's life was in danger.

"No one during our trial even suggested that the £223 that we actually managed to send to Jack was in fact used for terrorism. "Having escaped from ISIS (Islamic State), he is in limbo.

"If there is evidence he has committed a crime then he should be tried."

Scientists find earliest clues of Parkinson's in brain

● Scientists found that changes in the serotonin system in the brains of Parkinson's sufferers started to malfunction well before other symptoms occurred

● The research was published in *The Lancet Neurology*

Paris, France

Scientists said Thursday they had found the earliest signs of Parkinson's disease in the brain years before patients show any symptoms, a discovery that could eventually lead to better



Parkinson's is estimated to effect up to 10 million people worldwide

“Picking up on the condition earlier and being able to monitor its progression would aid the discovery of new and better treatments that could slow the loss of brain cells in Parkinson's”

BECKIE PORT
RESEARCH MANAGER AT
PARKINSON'S UK, WHO WAS NOT
INVOLVED IN THE STUDY.

screening for at-risk people.

Parkinson's, a neurodegenerative disorder that causes patients movement and cognitive problems, is estimated to effect up to 10 million people worldwide.

It is diagnosed by a build-up in the brain of a specific protein, a-synuclein, the cause of which is unclear.

However some people are born with a genetic mutation that makes them almost certain to develop the disease at some stage in their life.

Researchers from King's College London compared data from 14 individuals carrying the mutation with that of 65 non-genetic Parkinson's patients and 25 healthy volunteers.

They found that changes in the serotonin system in the brains of Parkinson's sufferers

started to malfunction well before other symptoms occurred.

"We found that serotonin function was an excellent marker for how advanced Parkinson's disease has become," said Heather Wilson, from the university's Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience.

"Therefore, brain imaging of the serotonin system could become a valuable tool to detect individuals at risk of Parkinson's diseases, monitor their progression and help with the development of new treatments."

Suspected causes of the disease before the study included levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, and there is growing evidence of a possible link between Parkinson's and gut function, though this is poorly understood.