

# Hong Lim Park protester pleads guilty

By WALTER SIM

THE first of six protesters facing public nuisance charges for their part in a Hong Lim Park protest rally on Sept 27 last year pleaded guilty in court yesterday.

Chua Siew Leng, 43, who does not hold a regular job, was fined \$300 by District Judge John Ng over her "very early" guilty plea and minor role in the protest, and because she had no prior criminal record. She could have been fined up to \$1,000.

The cases against the other five - including bloggers Roy Ngerng Yi Ling, 33, and Han Hui Hui, 23, who co-organised the protest rally - have been fixed for a joint trial on June 4 and 5.

Chua's lawyer, Mr Eugene Thuraisingam, said in a mitigation plea that she "has distanced herself from attending such events in the future".

He said: "(She) has realised that her role in the incident, no matter how minor, unfortunately did contribute to the disruption of the YMCA event and cause annoyance to members of the public."

The six were accused of disrupting the YMCA Proms @ The Park charity event for children with special needs, which was held in Hong Lim Park at the same time as the Return Our CPF protest rally.

Deputy Public Prosecutor John Lu told the court that they "became more emotive" when Minister of State for Trade and Industry Teo Ser Luck, the YMCA event's main guest, arrived at about 4.50pm.

The six accused and at least 20 others then



**Chua Siew Leng was fined \$300 because of her early guilty plea and her minor role in the protest, and as she had no prior criminal record. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW**

marched three times around the general vicinity of the YMCA event, shouting loudly, chanting slogans, waving flags, holding placards, blowing whistles loudly and beating drums.

"These acts, which lasted until 5pm, disrupted the YMCA event and caused annoyance to members of the public who were attending the YMCA event," DPP Lu said.

A 20-year-old full-time national serviceman called the police at 4.51pm that day to complain, saying protesters were "going around the place shouting".

The Attorney-General's Chambers last month rejected an application to withdraw the public nuisance charge against Chua, Janet Low Wai Choo, 55; Goh Aik Huat, 42; and Ivan Koh Yew Beng, 59; in lieu of a stern warning.

All six protesters were originally represented by lawyer M. Ravi. But he has since been suspended from practice following concerns about his mental health. The cases were then taken on by Mr Thuraisingam. But as of yesterday, he was handling only Chua's case.

Han, Low, Goh and Koh are now represented by Ms Violet Netto; and Ngerng by Mr George Hwang.

In addition to the public nuisance charge, Ngerng and Han each face a charge of organising a demonstration without approval, which carries a maximum fine of \$5,000.

Speaking to reporters after the sentencing, Chua said she took a different decision from the other five because of personal circumstances, adding that she had told them of her decision.

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