

All HK's magistrates sworn in once more

By LINDY COURSE

ALL Hongkong's 61 magistrates and tribunal officers were summoned back to the Supreme Court yesterday to be sworn in for a second time by the Chief Justice, Sir Ti Liang Yang.

Reporters were not allowed into the mass swearing-in ceremony performed in the Chief Justice's court, where the magistrates packed all the benches to take a new oath of allegiance to the Queen and a new judicial oath in which they promised to perform their jobs properly.

Even Hongkong's only lawfully appointed magistrate in the past 17 years, Mr Antony Crawshaw, and tribunal officers appointed before 1974 whose appointments were not in doubt, took the oath and will receive new warrants.

Chief Magistrate Mr Richard Hawkes said the warrants signed by the Governor, Sir David Wilson, on Monday night after Mr Justice Kaplan held that the Chief Justice had invalidly appointed magistrates since 1974, would be delivered in due course.

One magistrate said that while the oath-taking was solemn, there were lighter moments in the 15-minute ceremony, especially when Mr Peter Line's turn came to be called.

He was labelled the person who caused the trouble as he was the magistrate Mr Justice Kaplan found to have been unlawfully appointed.

Normally, magistrates are sworn in individually by the Chief Justice when they take up their appointments.

● Because of yesterday's mass ceremony, there were not enough Bibles to go around so the magistrates had to share with several of them touching one bible as they took the oath.