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HONG KONG POLICE FORCE
HEADQUARTERS,
ARSENAL STREET,
HONG KONG

29th April, 2009

Ms Fermi WONG
Hong Kong Unison
Flat 1303, 13/fl
No. 1 Elm Street
Tai Kok Tsui
Kowloon.

Dear Ms WONG,

I refer to your letter of 23rd March 2009 addressed to the Commissioner of Police, which reached the Police on 6th April. I refer also to your subsequent meeting with Mr. TANG How-kong, the Regional Commander of Kowloon West, and Mr. NG Ka-sing, the Chief Superintendent of the Police Public Relations Branch, on 9th April 2009, which was also attended by a LegCo Councillor and the Human Rights Monitor. I have been authorised to reply to your letter on behalf of the Commissioner of Police.

The Commissioner notes the concerns of the non ethnic Chinese (NEC) communities in Hong Kong arising from the open fire incident in Hung Hom on 17th March 2009, and wishes to assure you that all police officers are trained to exercise fairness and impartiality in dealing with all members of the community, irrespective of their ethnic or social background. The Police also have strict guidelines on the use of force and firearms. Each and every case involving the use of force or firearms is investigated thoroughly and impartially to ensure proper exercise of police power by the officers concerned.

Regarding the incident in Hung Hom on 17th March, the Police are now conducting a thorough investigation, in a fair and impartial manner. The Police will submit a detailed report to the Coroner upon completion of the investigation in accordance with Section 9 of the Coroners Ordinance (Cap. 504).

To ensure that the Police investigation is conducted impartially and thoroughly, the handling of this case is closely supervised and monitored by senior police officers.

The Police have the statutory obligation and will render full cooperation and assistance to the Coroner in the course of any death inquest to be held. In the interim, to protect the integrity of the ongoing investigation and the imminent consideration of the case by the Coroner, it would not be appropriate for the Force, or anyone for this matter, to comment on the details of the case.

In your letter, you commented that the Police should stop disclosing the deceased's personal details to the media. We would like to assure you that in line with established practice, the Police have released only basic information of the case, including the surname, age and gender of the subject, to the media upon enquiry. We have not disclosed and we will not disclose further personal data to the media.

You made a number of suggestions on possible improvements to the Force's handling of ethnic minorities. Please be assured that the Force places due emphasis on the needs of the ethnic minorities in the development of police practices in various areas, as explained below.

On communication with the ethnic minorities, in accordance with internal guidelines and as the need arises, the Force provides interpretation service to arrestees belonging to the ethnic minorities during the investigation process and the detention period. A variety of commonly-used police forms and publications have also been translated into languages of the nine main NEC groups in Hong Kong including Nepali¹. Police officers will use English when dealing with a non-Chinese speaking member of the public in operational situations, interpretation service will be arranged in non-urgent situations when needed.

On enhancement of officers' cultural sensitivity, all our officers receive training on relevant articles and requirements under the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap. 383) as part of their foundation

¹ Hindi, Indonesian, Mongolian, Nepali, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese.

training and continuous development training. Our officers are reminded, in particular, of Article 22 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights, which requires that:

“All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Additionally, newly-recruited police officers receive training on the policing of ethnic and other minority groups and participate in visits to NEC communities as part of the Force’s initiatives to engage all sectors of the community.

The Force, in partnership with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), organized a series of large-scale workshops in December 2008 for serving officers in order to raise their awareness of racial discrimination issues. In addition, a training day package developed in consultation with the EOC on various anti-discrimination ordinances was delivered to Force members starting from February 2009.

On complaint handling, the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO) handles all complaints against members of the Police Force impartially and seriously, irrespective of the identity, background or ethnic origin of the complainant. Staff of the CAPO also participated in the above-mentioned training and are fully aware of the need to address complaints involving racial discrimination in a suitably sensitive manner.

The Force has a long-standing policy of reaching out to the different ethnic communities in Hong Kong. This has been achieved by establishing and maintaining liaison with local NEC groups through visits and personal contacts by Police Community Relations Officers at District level, enhancing the cultural sensitivity of our frontline officers; offering language courses to officers working in Districts with high concentrations of NEC population; assisting NEC youths to better understand the Force through inclusion in the Junior Police Call programme and the dissemination of crime prevention messages within the NEC

communities. At a strategic level, the efforts of the Force towards supporting ethnic minorities are coordinated by a Working Group chaired by the Regional Commander of Kowloon West on behalf of the Commissioner.

----- We enclose for your reference an information paper on Police Handling of Ethnic Minorities and Beat Patrol Arrangement which we have prepared for the LegCo Panel on Security meeting on 5 May 2009.

You also suggested that the Force should consider recruiting ethnic minority residents as frontline officers. We recognise the potential benefits of having ethnic minority residents as police officers to provide better service for the multicultural population. Nevertheless, we need to consider very carefully the language proficiency requirement, as common to the civil service, and for the execution of police duties for the community in particular.

In closing, I wish to thank you for raising your concerns on racial sensitivity with us. I would like to emphasise that the Police Force attaches great importance to developing constructive long-term relationships with all NEC communities in Hong Kong. We hope that through effective communication, mutual trust can be established, contributing to a harmonious and inclusive society in which the safety of all citizens can be assured.

Yours sincerely,


(YU Mun-wah)
for Commissioner of Police

cc Secretary for Security
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

**For discussion
on 5 May 2009**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Police Handling of Ethnic Minorities and Beat Patrol Arrangement

Purpose

This paper sets out the information requested by Members of the Panel on Security on the Police's guidelines and training in respect of the handling of ethnic minorities and street sleepers, as well as the beat patrol arrangement for police officers.

Handling of ethnic minorities

Force Policy

2. The Force's "Vision, Statement of Common Purpose and Values", introduced in 1996, embraces the elements of "respect for the rights of members of the public and of the Force" and "fairness, impartiality and compassion in all dealings" as the Force's Core Values. Under this fundamental principle, police officers are required to serve the public, regardless of ethnic origin, in an impartial manner.

3. In April 2006, the Force established a Working Group on Non-ethnic Chinese to –

- (a) review and appraise existing mechanisms and initiatives within the Force that relate to ethnic minority issues;
- (b) develop means to enhance dialogue and engagement with ethnic minority communities; and
- (c) develop a policing strategy to work in partnership with ethnic minority communities to fight crime.

The Working Group works closely with various policy wings in the Police Headquarters to explore measures to promote racial equality in policing work.

Training to police officers

4. All police officers are trained to be fair and impartial in carrying out their duties and in dealing with all members of the community, irrespective of their background or ethnic origin. This basic concept is inculcated during their foundation training at the Hong Kong Police College, the training syllabus of which covers various elements on human rights and racial equality. In particular, the training focuses on the relevant provisions of the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap. 383), the Crimes (Torture) Ordinance (Cap. 427) and various anti-discrimination ordinances. As part of the foundation training, new recruits are also required to perform community service for the ethnic minorities to gain a better understanding of the non-ethnic Chinese culture and facilitate mutual understanding.

5. As part of their continuous development, junior police constables and inspectorate officers receive additional training, including modules on human rights and racial equality, periodically after receiving foundation training. The Force regularly reviews the content of its training courses, taking account of changes in society and feedback from the service recipients. Following the enactment of the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602) in 2008, the Police have, in partnership with the Equal Opportunities Commission, arranged a series of large-scale workshops for serving officers in order to raise their awareness of racial equality issues. The Police have also produced a training day package on the Ordinance to enhance police officers' awareness on racial equality in the provision of services to members of the public.

Other measures to enhance communication with ethnic minorities

6. The Police attach importance to developing constructive relationship with the ethnic communities in Hong Kong. They have implemented various initiatives to engage the ethnic communities, to enhance mutual understanding and to enhance service delivery to them.

Interpretation and translation service

7. In accordance with internal guidelines and as the need arises, the Force provides interpretation service to arrestees belonging to the ethnic minorities during the investigation process and the detention period. To facilitate communication between police officers and individuals belonging to the ethnic minorities not conversant with the

English / Chinese language, a variety of commonly used police forms and publications have been translated into different ethnic minority languages. Moreover, in order to enhance the provision of emergency services to ethnic minorities making 999 calls, the Kowloon Regional Command and Control Centre has embarked on a pilot scheme whereby volunteers are engaged through non-governmental organisations to act as interpreters via conference calling. The Police will review the operation of the pilot scheme and assess whether it should be rolled out to the other Regional Command and Control Centres.

Proactive engagement of ethnic minorities

8. The Force has a longstanding policy of reaching out to different ethnic communities in Hong Kong. This has been achieved by establishing and maintaining liaison with local ethnic minority groups through visits and personal contacts by Police Community Relations Officers at District level, offering language courses to police officers working in Districts with a high concentration of ethnic minorities population, establishing contact points with various ethnic minority media channels for timely dissemination of information, facilitating police volunteer work, and assisting ethnic minority youths to better understand their civic responsibilities and the work of the Force by engaging them in the Junior Police Call programme.

Handling of street sleepers

Force Policy

9. The Force has formulated guidelines and procedures for the handling of destitutes, which include those who have no means of shelter and hence have no option but to sleep outdoors.

10. On encountering a destitute person who appears to be in need of assistance, a police officer will check if the person concerned has been reported as a "missing person" and inform him / her of the services provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). If the destitute person agrees to be referred to a SWD establishment, he / she will be taken there by Police transport. For destitutes who are in poor health, elderly or under the age of 14 years, police officers will convey him / her to the nearest public hospital and will advise him / her to approach SWD for assistance.

Training to police officers

11. All officers are trained to handle destitutes with care. The foundation training for probationary Inspectors and recruit Constables covers the procedures and techniques for handling destitutes.

Beat patrol arrangement

12. It is the Force policy that under normal circumstances, one officer is deployed to cover one beat¹. The Divisional Commander may, in consultation with his District Commander, deploy more than one officer to a beat after an evaluation of the need and risk concerned. The factors to be considered include –

- (a) the manner and nature of crime reports and incidents prevailing in the beat;
- (b) the unique features of the beat and the risk factors; and
- (c) deployment considerations, including available manpower and their personal safety.

On this basis, police officers on the beat are generally deployed to patrol by themselves during daylight hours to improve beat coverage, while officers normally patrol in pairs in the evening and at night.

13. The personal safety of police officers on beat patrol is of paramount concern to the Force. Whenever a single officer is deployed to respond to an incident, the despatching officer and the officer deployed will use their experience and discretion to call for assistance from other officers when the circumstances so require. Moreover, officers at Sergeant rank, supported by experienced Station Sergeants, are tasked to monitor, support and supervise a number of beats within a specified sector of a Division.

14. Officers in Emergency Units, Police Tactical Units, Task Forces can be deployed to reinforce beat duties where necessary. Auxiliary officers are also required to be on beat duty for at least 72 hours a year.

¹ A beat covers a defined area and the officer deployed to cover a particular beat is responsible for patrolling the area as well as handling incidents and reports occurring in that area.

15. The current beat patrol arrangement, which enables Formation Commanders to have flexibility in deploying officers and adjusting the pattern of beat duty, has proved to be effective over the years. That said, the Police will keep the arrangement under review with a view to further enhancing the effectiveness of beat duty.

**Security Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force**

April 2009