



By fax 2530 9167

22 March 2011

Hon Lau Kin-ye, Miriam
Chairman of the Legislative Council House Committee

Dear Chairman,

Thank you for your letter of 21 March 2011 to the Chief Executive. I am authorized to reply on his behalf.

The Administration, the Legislative Council and the Hong Kong community share a common wish – we all hope that open and fair proceedings in the death inquest of the Coroner’s Court will give a truthful account of the tragic incident in Manila and do justice to the victims.

The Administration has, through numerous channels, made its best endeavours to urge the Philippines authorities to render full assistance in the death inquest. We have been seeking assistance from the Philippines authorities and the Consulate-General of the Philippines in Hong Kong direct. We have also closely liaised with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (OCMFA), ensuring that our request is also put to the Philippines through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the margins of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders’ Meeting in mid-November 2010, the President of the Philippines assured the Chief Executive that the Philippines Government would render assistance in facilitating the Coroner’s death inquest in Hong Kong. During his visit to Hong Kong in mid-December 2010, the Secretary of Tourism of the Philippines gave the same assurance to the Chief Executive.

中華人民共和國香港特別行政區行政長官辦公室

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Since the commencement of the death inquest on 14 February, the Administration has continued with its efforts through various channels. We have also followed up the arrangements required for the Philippines witnesses to testify.

On 18 March 2011, the Chief Executive met with seven of the victims/family members. The Administration also put in another round of efforts over the weekend - the Chief Executive approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs again and requested the latter to reiterate our strong demand for key Philippines witnesses to testify, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had so followed up; the Secretary for Security met with the Philippines Consul-General in Hong Kong on 19 March and made the same demand.

The Philippines authorities replied to the Administration on 20 March that another four witnesses were willing to testify, adding that the remaining witnesses who had not sent their replies so far were unlikely to testify. We note that the Coroner decided on 21 March not to send officers to the Philippines to take evidence from these four witnesses.

During the death inquest, a total of 10 Philippines witnesses have testified through the video link. The Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have made every effort through various avenues to press for full cooperation of the Philippines authorities. The failure of the other key witnesses to respond positively has fallen much short of our expectation and we are indeed very disappointed. This notwithstanding, we believe that the Coroner's Court, having considered all the evidence presented during the inquest, will deliver its verdict professionally.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Bernadette Linn)

Private Secretary to Chief Executive

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