

**For information
on 19 March 2011**

Special Meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Security

Death Inquest of Coroner's Court into the Manila Hostage Incident

A 21-member Hong Kong tour group to Manila, including a tour guide, was taken hostage on 23 August 2010. Eight Hong Kong tour group members were killed and seven injured in the incident. After the bodies of the eight deceased tour group members were returned to Hong Kong on 25 August by a chartered flight, the Coroner had, by virtue of the Coroners Ordinance (Cap. 504), issued an autopsy order and requested the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) to investigate into the incident.

2. Under the strong co-ordination of the Office of Commissioner of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (OCMFA) and the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines (the Chinese Embassy), the HKPF have worked closely with the Philippine authorities on the basis of the international police cooperation protocol. With the agreement and assistance of the Philippine authorities, the HKPF immediately commenced relevant work, and four delegations were sent to Manila to gather information and evidence. At the request of the HKPF, the Philippine authorities also provided sworn statements, reports and other relevant materials to assist the independent investigation by the HKPF.

3. After the HKPF submitted a report on the investigation to the Coroner on 5 November 2010, the Coroner determined on 30 November 2010 that a death inquest into the Manila hostage incident should be conducted on 14 February 2011.

4. At the margins of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leader's Meeting in mid November 2010, the Chief Executive received positive response from the President of the Philippines who assured that the Philippine Government would render assistance to facilitate the Coroner's death inquest. During the meeting with the Secretary for Tourism of the Philippines in mid December 2010, the Chief Executive again received assurance that the Philippine authorities would fully cooperate with the death inquest.

The commencement of Death Inquest

5. As we understand, the Coroner issued summons to 116 Philippines witnesses in mid December 2010, i.e. three months before the commencement of the death inquest on 14 February 2011. On 20 February 2011, the Vice Consul of the Consulate General of the Philippines in Hong Kong informed the Coroner that 72 witnesses decided not to testify in the inquest while the rest of the witnesses had yet to reply.

6. The Chief Secretary for Administration met with the Consul-General of the Philippines in Hong Kong on 3 March 2011 to urge the Philippine government to take all necessary actions to assist the death inquest. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) has been following up with the Philippine authorities through the Consulate General of the Philippines in Hong Kong on this matter and urging the Philippine authorities to give a prompt response.

7. In fact, the HKSARG has been following up with the Philippine authorities on the witnesses' attendance at the inquest in Hong Kong through various channels. For instance, one of the witnesses expresses his willingness to testify through video link as he is not able to come to Hong Kong. Upon receipt of consent from the Department of Justice of the Philippines on 11 March 2011, the HKPF and DoJ officers of Hong Kong departed for Manila on 13 March 2011 to ensure that the taking of evidence would be carried out in an appropriate manner and in accordance with the relevant procedures. As at 18 March 2011, 10 witnesses had testified in the death inquest through video link.

Conclusion

8. The HKSARG has been actively following up with the Philippine authorities on the witnesses' attendance at the inquest in Hong Kong through various channels. We will seek the assistance from the OCMFA and the Chinese Embassy, as necessary, in ensuring that the Philippine witnesses could cooperate with the death inquest in Hong Kong. We believe that the Coroner's Court will, having considered all relevant evidence and information deliver a

fair verdict on the cause of the deaths and make the truth of the incident known to the community.

Security Bureau
March 2011