

Police's Dissemination of Information of Unforeseen Incidents

With regard to the letter from the Legislative Council Panel on Security on 11 October 2011 requesting for details on the dissemination of information of unforeseen incidents, our response to the three parts of the question is as follows:

- (a) According to the Police's mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents, if the case involves public interest, public safety or is a major incident, the information concerned will be disseminated to the media. When disseminating information, the Police will take into consideration the public's right to know, and comply strictly with the relevant ordinances and the requirements of the "Code on Access to Information". At the same time, the process should not affect covert operations, privacy of individuals and possible judicial procedures.

Regarding the arrangements for disseminating information on four wounding cases in Tseung Kwan O, the Police have already provided a response on 10 October 2011, indicating that since those four cases involve public interest and public safety, the Police will investigate if there is any room for improvement in the process of disseminating information or any failure to follow procedures properly. We appreciate the public concern about the cases. The Police will later conduct a review on the operation with a view to securing a balance between the public's right to know and Police operational needs.

In fact, when the Police received the report of the cases, they were immediately consolidated and handed over to District Crime Squad of Kwun Tong District for follow up. Apart from carrying out background investigation, uniform and plainclothes patrols were also stepped up in the district and special operations were conducted by plainclothes officers. On 10 October 2011, the Police arrested and subsequently charged a 31-year-old man in connection with those four cases.

- (b) The Police always respect the public's right to know and media's freedom of reporting. Public support is necessary to enable the Police to carry out their duties effectively and it is vital to establish and maintain the confidence of the public in the Force and project a good image.

According to established policy, the Police will endeavour to facilitate media reporting as far as practicable. As mentioned in paragraph (a), when disseminating information of unforeseen incidents, the Police will take into consideration the public's right to know, and comply strictly with the relevant ordinances and the requirements of the "Code on Access to Information". At the same time, the process should not affect covert operations, privacy of individuals and possible judicial procedures.

- (c) Based on the Police's existing mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents, when an emergency call is received by the 999 Control Centre, the Police will immediately deploy officers to the scene to understand the situation, provide assistance, or conduct investigation. After the nature of the incident reported has been ascertained and immediate measures have been taken to protect life and property of the public, the 999 Control Centre will pass the relevant information to the Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB) immediately if the case involves public interest, public safety or is a major incident. The PPRB will then disseminate the information in the form of "Attention News Editors" through the Government News and Media Information System of the Information Services Department, so the media can decide whether to cover the case at scene.

Improvements to the mechanism have also been made last year through upgrading technology and streamlining of procedures. The dissemination of information has become more efficient. The Police will continue to maintain dialogue with media agencies and journalists' associations and review the mechanism from time to time, so as to improve the efficiency of information dissemination.