



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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GOVERNOR EXPRESSES SYMPATHY TO FAMILIES IN SHEK KONG INCIDENT

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, THIS (TUESDAY) MORNING EXPRESSED HIS VERY DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILIES OF ALL THOSE WHO DIED IN THE TRAGIC INCIDENT AT THE SHEK KONG DETENTION CENTRE FOR VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS.

SAYING THAT IT WAS AN INCIDENT OF REALLY SENSELESS VIOLENCE, THE GOVERNOR SAID: "THIS IS A REAL TRAGEDY WHICH ALL OF US ARE DEEPLY DISTRESSED TO SEE AND DEEPLY DISTRESSED BOTH FOR THE APPALLING LOSS OF LIFE AND FOR THE FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN THE INCIDENT."

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER VISITING SHEK KONG CENTRE, SIR DAVID SAID HE WOULD NOT LIKE TO ATTRIBUTE BLAME IN THE INCIDENT.

"PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED AND THAT MEANS THAT THERE HAS TO BE A VERY THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF WHY IT HAPPENED, WHY THAT HUT WAS BURNED," HE ADDED.

THE GOVERNOR SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE IN ALL THE OTHER VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE DETENTION CAMPS KNOW THE PRECISE FACTS OF WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SEK KONG CAMP, AND NOT JUST RELY ON RUMOURS.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, SIR DAVID SAID THERE WAS NO REASON WHY THE INCIDENT SHOULD BE A SETBACK TO THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME FOR VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE.

"THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION SCHEME STANDS ON ITS OWN MERITS; IT MAKES ABSOLUTE SENSE FOR PEOPLE TO GO BACK TO THEIR HOMES IN VIETNAM AND I HOPE THAT SCHEME WILL GO ON, INDEED I HOPE THAT IT WILL EXPAND," HE SAID.

ASKED WHAT ACTION WAS BEING TAKEN TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION IN THE CAMP, SIR DAVID SAID: "WE ARE SEPARATING THE TWO GROUPS: THERE HAVE BEEN GROUPS OF NORTHERNERS AND SOUTHERNERS WHO HAVE BEEN FIGHTING; THAT APPEARS TO BE AT THE ROOT OF THE WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT.

"THOSE TWO GROUPS WILL BE SEPARATED, THERE WILL BE PEOPLE MOVED OUT OF THIS CAMP; WE HAVE A MINORITY IN THIS CAMP OF NORTHERNERS AND WE'LL BE MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEM TO MOVED OUT OF THIS CAMP," HE SAID.

THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, MR LI KWAN-HA, WHO ACCOMPANIED THE GOVERNOR THIS MORNING SAID TOTAL ORDER HAD BEEN RESTORED TO THE DETENTION CENTRE FOR VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE AND THAT INVESTIGATION WAS IN PROGRESS.

"THE REGIONAL CRIME UNIT IS HANDLING THE CRIME INVESTIGATION SIDE OF IT, ASSISTED BY THE GOVERNMENT CHEMIST IN GETTING THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE. THE FIRE SERVICES IS ALSO IN ATTENDANCE TO HELP AS PART OF THE INVESTIGATION," HE ADDED.

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STATEMENT BY S FOR S ON INCIDENT IN SHEK KONG CENTRE

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THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS ISSUED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TODAY (TUESDAY) ON THE INCIDENT IN SHEK KONG DETENTION CENTRE:

"THIS IS A GREAT TRAGEDY. WE ARE ALL DISTRESSED BY IT AND OUR SYMPATHY GOES TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BEREAVED, THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN INJURED AND ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THIS TRAGEDY. WE ARE WORKING VERY CLOSELY WITH THE UNHCR AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN THE CAMPS TO HELP AND COMFORT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED.

"THIS WAS A VERY SERIOUS CRIMINAL ACT. IT WAS A DELIBERATE ATTACK UPON A GROUP OF PEOPLE IN THE HUT AND APPEARS TO BE A DELIBERATE CASE OF ARSON. IT IS THEREFORE BEING TREATED AS A SERIOUS CRIME AND BEING INVESTIGATED AS A SERIOUS CRIME. THIS IS OUR FIRST PRIORITY IN DEALING WITH THE INCIDENT.

"THE STAFFING LEVEL OF POLICE IN THE CENTRE AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE INCIDENT WAS NORMAL. SHEK KONG HAS FOR A LONG TIME BEEN A VERY PEACEFUL CAMP. THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF ANY TROUBLE EXCEPT A RELATIVELY MINOR DISPUTE YESTERDAY EVENING OVER THE HOT WATER DISTRIBUTION. IT SEEMED THAT SOMEHOW THE MINOR INCIDENT WHICH APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN RESOLVED DID LATER FLARE UP INTO A MAJOR AND TRAGIC INCIDENT.

"WE SHOULD NOT CONFUSE THE CAUSES OF THIS TRAGEDY WITH AN INCIDENT WHICH MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO IT. I DO NOT THINK THAT 21 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BURNT TO DEATH BECAUSE OF A LACK OF HOT WATER SUPPLY. IT IS A MUCH DEEPER PROBLEM WHICH WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DEAL WITH, WHICH IS THAT THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE STUCK IN CAMPS WHO DO NOT WISH TO BE STUCK IN CAMPS. THEY DON'T INDEED WISH TO BE IN HONG KONG AT ALL.

"THIS TRAGEDY IS BOUND TO CAUSE CONCERN IN SOME OTHER DETENTION CENTRES. IT IS CLEARLY BETTER THAT PEOPLE SHOULD BE TOLD VERY CLEARLY WHAT HAD HAPPENED RATHER THAN THAT RUMOURS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO CIRCULATE. THEREFORE WE ARE MAKING SURE THAT THE FACTS ARE EXPLAINED CAREFULLY AND CLEARLY TO PEOPLE IN OTHER DETENTION CENTRES.

"THE MAJORITY OF VIETNAMESE IN DETENTION CENTRES ARE PEACE LOVING.

"THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE INCIDENT WAS A RESULT OF EMOTIONS IN THE CENTRE CAUSED BY THE ORDERLY RETURN PROGRAMME. ON THE CONTRARY, THE NEWS OF REPATRIATION HAD BEEN TAKEN VERY CALMLY IN THE CAMPS. I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY CONNECTION WHATSOEVER BETWEEN THIS TRAGIC INCIDENT AND REPATRIATION. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT TENSION IN DETENTION CENTRES HAD INCREASED AS A RESULT OF OUR AGREEMENT WITH VIETNAM LAST OCTOBER ON ORDERLY REPATRIATION.

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"IT IS NOT UNUSUAL TO HAVE NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO RETURN TO BE ACCOMMODATED TOGETHER. THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE IN THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION CAMP IN LO WU. IN THE MAIN DETENTION CENTRES, VIETNAMESE FROM THE NORTH AND FROM THE SOUTH ARE LARGELY SEPARATED.

"SECURITY OF DETENTION CENTRES IS CONSTANTLY UNDER REVIEW. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN OTHER CAMPS. WE CERTAINLY HOPE NOT. BUT CLEARLY WE WILL MAINTAIN OUR VIGILANCE IN OTHER CAMPS.

"OUR LATEST FIGURES ARE THAT THERE ARE 21 DEATHS AND 128 INJURIES. OF THE INJURED, 53 ARE STILL IN HOSPITAL, SEVEN ARE IN CRITICAL CONDITION.

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INCIDENT AT SHEK KONG VIETNAMESE DETENTION CENTRE

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AT ABOUT 11 PM LAST NIGHT, A FIGHT BROKE OUT AT SECTION C OF THE SHEK KONG VIETNAMESE DETENTION CENTRE. THIS LATER LED TO THE OCCUPANTS OF SECTION D OF THE CENTRE BREAKING DOWN THE GATE BETWEEN THE TWO SECTIONS AND JOINING THE FIGHT.

THE FIGHT INVOLVED SEVERAL HUNDRED VIETNAMESE AND ONE OF THE HUTS IN SECTION C CAUGHT FIRE.

POLICE REINFORCEMENTS WERE CALLED TO RESTORE ORDER. 33 SMOKE ROUNDS WERE DISCHARGED. ORDER WAS THEN RESTORED.

SOME 119 INJURED VIETNAMESE WERE TRANSFERRED TO TUEN MUN HOSPITAL AND POK OI HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT.

FIRE SERVICES EXTINGUISHED THE FIRE IN THE HUT AND 17 DEAD BODIES WERE FOUND INSIDE IN A VERY BADLY BURNT CONDITION.

THE SCENE HAS BEEN SEALED FOR FORENSIC EXAMINATION AND UNTIL THIS IS COMPLETED, THE EXACT NUMBER OF DEATHS AND CAUSE OF THE FIRE CANNOT BE ASCERTAINED.

THE SHEK KONG DETENTION CENTRE IS A CLOSED CAMP WHICH PRESENTLY HOUSES OVER 9,000 VIETNAMESE. SECTION C IS BEING USED AS A TEMPORARY DETENTION CENTRE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR REPATRIATION. 806 VIETNAMESE WERE IN THIS SECTION WHEN THE TROUBLE STARTED.

THE SITUATION IS NOW CALM AND A STRONG POLICE PRESENCE WILL BE STATIONED AT THE CENTRE TO MAINTAIN ORDER.

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