

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO LITTLE INDIA RIOT TO COMMENCE HEARING ON 19 FEBRUARY 2014

The public hearing for the Committee of Inquiry (COI) on the Little India Riot will start on 19 February 2014, Wednesday, at 10.00 am at Court 13, Subordinate Courts, 1 Havelock Square. Admission to observe the public hearings will be on a first-come-first-served basis.

2 In preparation for the inquiry proceedings, appointed investigators from the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) have interviewed and taken statements from close to 300 witnesses. The COI has reviewed these statements and intend to call at least 70 witnesses to give oral evidence at the public hearings. The COI has visited the scene of the riot in Little India, and has also visited and spoken to many foreign workers including the foreign workers in dormitories in Tagore Lane, Avery Lodge and Penjuru Dormitory, to seek their views on matters relating to the riot, including the living conditions of foreign workers in Singapore.

3 The Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) will be leading the evidence at the hearing. On the first day of the hearing, Senior State Counsel David Khoo will present an opening statement to the COI explaining broadly the evidence which will be led over the course of the inquiry, which will cover the events surrounding the riot and some of the possible factors and circumstances that may have led to it.

4 The COI is required by law to focus solely on its Terms of Reference (TOR), and is prohibited from determining the civil or criminal liability of any person. The COI hearings will not interfere with ongoing criminal proceedings in relation to the riot. In any event, the guilt or innocence of those charged has no relevance to the TOR.

5 The COI had earlier invited all 57 foreign workers who were repatriated to be interviewed on a voluntary basis before departing from Singapore. The COI interviewed 20 of the workers who volunteered to be interviewed. At the hearing commencing on 19 February 2014, the COI will also call a number of foreign workers who have been issued Police advisories to give evidence.

6 The COI Secretariat has received 22 emails and letters from a number of persons and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) interested in the proceedings. Those who have written in have offered their views on possible causes of the riot, suggestions on how the situation can be improved, and other assistance. The COI will take into consideration the submissions received for the purposes of the inquiry, based on the TOR of the COI. The COI will also determine which of these persons or NGOs should be called to give evidence at the hearing.

7 It is estimated that the COI hearing will span at least four weeks. Some of the key witnesses that will be called to give evidence include the bus driver and time-keeper of the bus involved in the fatal accident at Little India on the day of the riot, expert witnesses, officers from Singapore Police Force (SPF) and Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), business owners and residents in Little India, foreign worker dormitory operators and foreign workers who were issued Police advisories.

8 The COI expects to question all witnesses.

9 The first week of the hearing will focus on establishing how the riot unfolded and how the response forces managed the incident. Further information will be provided on the evidence which will be led on following weeks.

10 Upon the conclusion of the public hearing, the COI will consider the evidence presented and submit a report of its proceedings, findings and recommendations to the Minister for Home Affairs, the appointing authority of the COI.

COI Secretariat

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