

**CONFIDENTIAL**

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中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部衛生福利及食物局  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
Government Secretariat, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
The People's Republic of China

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**Your Ref.:** CB2/SC2

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19 April 2004

Miss Flora TAI  
Clerk to Select Committee to inquire into the  
handling of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome  
outbreak by the Government and the Hospital Authority  
Legislative Council  
8 Jackson Road, Hong Kong  
(Fax: 2248 2011)

Dear Miss TAI,

**Select Committee to inquire into the handling of  
the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak by  
the Government and the Hospital Authority**

I refer to your letter of 13 April 2004 and hereby submit my written statement  
as requested. My professional qualification and experience are set out in the attached  
Curriculum Vitae.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Dr S V LO".

Dr S V LO  
Head of Research Office

## **Written statement of Dr Lo Su Vui**

In response to the request from the Select Committee, I have prepared the following written statement regarding the meeting on 5 April 2003. This statement is prepared to the best of my recollection. It should be noted that since the meeting took place more than a year ago, it is impossible for me to delineate the exact sequence of events. The statement is therefore a factual account of my recollection of what had taken place at the meeting, albeit not necessarily in sequential order.

### **Account of the Meeting on 5 April 2003**

2           In the morning of 5 April 2003, I attended a meeting in the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau chaired by the Secretary, Dr EK Yeoh. Other participants included Dr Paul Saw, Dr Thomas Tsang, Dr Stephen Ng whom I met for the first time, Dr Trevor Ellis and Mr M C Yuen, who came in sometime after the meeting had started.

3           Dr Thomas Tsang presented the epidemiological findings of the Amoy Gardens outbreak and other findings of Department of Health's multidisciplinary team. Dr Paul Saw also reported the initial test results for rat samples taken from the housing estate. It was noted that some rat droppings were PCR-positive for coronavirus. At the time, Dr Ng indicated that the results confirmed that the rats were the cause of the Amoy Gardens outbreak. Cautions were expressed, however, by others about jumping to conclusion. Possible explanations included environmental contamination as well as issues to do with specificity and sensitivity of the PCR test.

4           Other than Dr Tsang and Dr Saw, Mr Yuen also gave a briefing at the meeting. He told the meeting about the main species of rats commonly found in Hong Kong and their behaviour and habitats. He also mentioned the common pest control measures and the rat investigation carried out by his department at the Amoy Gardens. I cannot recall Mr Yuen giving us an estimation of the number of rats in Amoy Gardens but remember the message that the housing estate did not have a serious problem of rat infestation.

5           During the meeting, Dr Yeoh asked Dr Ellis to conduct

autopsy on the rats trapped by Mr Yuen's department immediately, and Dr Ellis left the meeting to carry out the autopsy. Dr Yeoh also asked that rat investigations be intensified, that more rats be collected in order to carry out more tests, and that the pest control efforts be stepped up. There was general consensus that until more light was shed as to the true meaning of the PCR results, they should be kept confidential as they were inconclusive and could be misleading.

6                Shortly after the meeting, the precise date and time I cannot recall, I learnt from Dr Ellis that his autopsy findings revealed that the gross pathology showed no evidence of severe respiratory disease.

#### Response to the issues set out in Appendix IV

*When were the attendees told of the test results of the rat droppings and throat swab and what was their reaction?*

7                I first learnt of the test results in the meeting on 5 April 2003. My recollection of the participants' reaction could be grouped into two types: (i) one of excitement as expressed by Dr Ng, citing the finding as affirmation that the rats were the cause of the Amoy Gardens outbreak, and (ii) one of prudence with emphasis on further tests to be undertaken to ascertain whether the rats were actually infected.

*Who sent Dr Trevor Ellis to perform the autopsies on rats trapped the night before?*

8                Dr Yeoh sent Dr Trevor Ellis to perform the autopsies on the trapped rats.

*When did Dr Yeoh join the meeting?*

9                I cannot recall the exact time Dr Yeoh came to the meeting but I am certain that Dr Ellis was present when Dr Yeoh started the meeting. Mr Yuen, however, joined the meeting sometime after.

*When did Mr Yuen arrive at the meeting? Was he summoned to the meeting by Dr Yeoh? If yes, why was he summoned to the meeting?*

10            I cannot recall the exact time Mr Yuen arrived at the meeting. However, he was not present when Dr Yeoh commenced the meeting. He came in sometime later, after Dr Yeoh asked for a pest control expert to shed further light about the rats in Hong Kong.

*Was there any discussion on the ramifications of the spread of SARS by rats?*

11            My recollection is that there was no discussion at the meeting on the ramifications of the spread of SARS by rats and Dr Yeoh did not express fear that there might be riots in Hong Kong.

*Was there any discussion on the killing of rats?*

12            Mr Yuen briefed the meeting on the common pest control measures and the rat investigation carried out by his department at the Amoy Gardens. Participants of the meeting did not engage in a discussion on the killing of rats. I cannot recall Mr Yuen giving an estimation of the number of rats in Amoy Gardens but remember the message that the housing estate did not have a serious problem of rat infestation. Although Dr Yeoh had asked that investigations on rats be intensified and the pest control efforts be stepped up, he did not give any specific instruction to kill rats.

*Did Dr Ng suggest that rats which were virus positive should be kept alive to observe how long the virus stayed active in them?*

13            I cannot recall Dr Ng making the suggestion.

*Was there any discussion on what to say to the public about the investigation on rats? Did Dr Yeoh give instruction to stop the investigation on rats?*

14           My recollection is that there was no discussion on what to say to the public about the investigation on rats. However, there was a general consensus that until more light was shed as to the true meaning of the PCR results, the findings should be kept confidential as they were inconclusive and could be misleading.

15           Dr Yeoh did not give instruction to stop the investigation on rats. On the contrary, he had asked that rat investigations be intensified and that more rats be collected in order to carry out more tests.

*Did Dr Yeoh request everyone at the meeting to keep the rat findings confidential? Did Dr Yeoh send someone to call Dr Ellis to stop performing the autopsies on rats?*

16           I cannot recall if it was Dr Yeoh who made the request to keep the rat findings confidential or the issue was raised by others. In any event, there was a consensus that the results should be kept confidential until more light could be shed as to their true meaning.

17           Dr Yeoh did not send someone to call Dr Ellis to stop performing the autopsies on rats.

*Was there any discussion on the evacuation of all the residents of Amoy Gardens? Did Dr Yeoh make any statement to the effect that the residents of Amoy Gardens would have to be sacrificed?*

18           There was no discussion at the meeting on the evacuation of all the residents of Amoy Gardens. Dr Yeoh did not make any statement to the effect that the residents of Amoy Gardens would have to be sacrificed.

*Did Dr Ng suggest warning people to keep their premises rat-safe by closing windows and covering their food? Was Dr Ng involved in the investigation into the outbreak at Amoy Gardens? Did Dr Ng stay until the end of the meeting on 5 April 2003?*

19            I cannot recall Dr Ng making the suggestion. My recollection is that Dr Ng stayed until the end of the meeting on 5 April 2003. From my interactions with DH, my understanding is that Dr Ng was not involved in the investigation into the outbreak at Amoy Gardens.

*What was the purpose of Dr Lo's call to Dr Ng on 8 April 2003?*

20            I telephoned Dr Ng on 8 April 2003 because he sent Dr Yeoh a letter on the previous day and I was asked by Dr Yeoh to respond to him. In the telephone conversation, I told Dr Ng about the investigations that were being performed by environmental health, veterinary and public health personnel.