

# Thousands expected for pan-party protest rally

## Ambrose Leung

Tens of thousands of marchers are expected to flood Hong Kong streets on Sunday in a demonstration organised by the main political parties to demand justice for those killed in the Manila hostage tragedy.

The march from Victoria Park to the Legislative Council building will be the climax of an outpouring of collective grief and anger in the city at the Philippine government's handling of the tragedy, following a series

A vigil will be organised by Catholic and Protestant groups in Chater Garden from 6pm.

The Philippine consulate general is also bracing for a noisy protest tomorrow organised by the League of Social Democrats. League chairman Andrew To Kwan-hang expects more than 100 league members to march to the consulate in Admiralty at 3pm.

A group of internet users is organising a signature campaign in the Mong Kok pedestrian zone from 4pm today, aiming to collect 10,000 signatures to present to the United Nations. In addition, the legislature will meet for an emergency session on Wednesday to debate a motion condemning the Philippine government for its failure to save the hostages.

Yesterday, the Hong Kong Journalists Association handed a petition to the Philippine consulate, expressing its anger and concern about comments made by Philippine President Benigno Aquino, who suggested the live media broadcast of the incident agitated the gunman.

The Hong Kong Journalists Association calls on the Philippine government to refrain from using this incident to introduce harsh measures against the media in order to cover up their incompetence, the petition said.

rally will be held in Victoria Park before the start of the march at 3pm. Participants are encouraged to wear black or white clothing in memory of the dead.

"We aim to show solidarity and our deepest condolences by peaceful means," Democratic Party lawmaker Cheung Man-kyong said.

Tam Yiu-chung, chairman of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, said it was being held because "many people wanted to do something to allow everyone to participate".

## Respect and justice Rally organisers predict about 50,000 people will participate

The march is scheduled to start from Victoria Park at

# 3pm

of protests, petitions and remembrance activities.

Organisers told police they expect 50,000 marchers but the turnout could be much higher. They said they did not expect the march to have a racial element but some have called for restraint because foreign domestic helpers and religious groups will hold their own day-long remembrance in nearby Chater Garden.

Announcing the march at a rare joint press conference yesterday, parties across the political spectrum said they wanted to give the public an opportunity to pay their respects to the dead as well as to demand justice from the Philippine government. A



The body of Rolando Mendoza, dressed in his police uniform, lies draped in the national flag and surrounded by the trappings of his career in a chapel 160 kilometres from Manila. Photo: K.Y. Cheng

# Hijacker set to be buried in his uniform

Irene Jay Liu in Tanaunan, Batangas province, Philippines

Rolando Mendoza will be buried in his uniform. At a small roadside chapel two hours outside Manila, his wake appears disconnected from the violence and angst of the past four days. Instead, it celebrates his life before - before the bloodshed, before the ill-fated tour bus, before the dismissal that started him down this tortured path.

The former police captain's memorial is frozen in time. In his coffin, Mendoza's blue uniform is crisp, his name badge polished. A Philippine flag is draped on top and mementos of that previous life before the disgrace and the carnage - a medal emblazoned with the word "Gallantry", a news clipping on the nation's "outstanding policemen", plaques of commendation, a photo in uniform. But despite appearances, the recent past hangs heavy in the tiny

chapel. Those who come to mourn are not only mourning for a father, cousin or neighbour. They mourn for those who died at his hands.

"We express our sincere condolences to Hong Kong and to the families who have lost their loved ones. We are truly, very sorry," Mendoza's younger son, Bismarck, said. A policeman himself, the 26-year-old wears a black police "special action force" T-shirt with "Mendoza" emblazoned on the back.

The young policeman grew teary-eyed as his elder brother, Andrew, recalled their father's happier days. "My father was a good policeman," he said. A seaman, Andrew was in Singapore when everything fell apart on Monday. "I saw the news. 'Oh, that's my father.' I came back on the 24th. He was already gone."

He walked over to his father's coffin. Fingertips touching the glass above his father's face, he gazed down at his father in silence. He

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A cousin of Manila gunman Rolando Mendoza

looked back up, adjusted the plaques and photos, and straightened the medal on the flag.

"Will people in Hong Kong always hate us?... I'm worried I can't go back to Hong Kong. That's why I feel alone."

Meanwhile, Hong Thai Travel general manager Susanna Lau Meisze yesterday paid a visit to injured tour member Joe Chan Kwok-chu, 46, and quoted him as saying there were many questionable points in the incident, including that the gunman had sought to reclaim his suspended pension of a million pesos from the government. And he did not understand why the authorities ignored the request and caused the loss of so many lives, Lau said.

## Gunmen wearing police uniforms stop bus and kill four

Gunmen wearing police uniforms stopped a bus in the southern Philippines early yesterday and shot four people dead, including two police marshals, officials said.

Police said the bus was travelling from Cagayan de Oro to Zamboanga in the south - where Muslim rebels and

criminal gangs operate - when it was flagged down at a road checkpoint.

The gunmen ordered the passengers off the bus and then shot four people - two uniformed police marshals, the driver and the bus conductor, said Orlando Venis, the Lanao del Norte provincial police chief.

The attackers set the bus on fire and fled. Venis said the marshals were deployed on regional buses plying the same highway after a gunman earlier this month held up a bus to extort money from passengers.

Associated Press



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# Tsang government's strong response may boost popularity in short term

## Fanny W. Y. Fung

Strongly worded statements about the Manila gunman and the Philippine government; arranging charter flights for survivors; embracing family members of the dead.

The Tsang administration's response to the Manila hostage crisis has been markedly stronger than that shown during the last big emergency faced by Hongkongers - a mass stranding of tourists at Bangkok's main airport in Thailand last year.

And yesterday it was praised for its swift reaction and efforts to help affected families by lawmakers from across the political spectrum at a special meeting of the Legislative Council's security panel.

But whether this will help the administration improve its popularity in the long run remains to be seen, academics and legislators said.

The popularity ratings of Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen and his government have slid since mid-2008, since public outcry over the handling of former housing chief Leung Chin-man's new job with a developer and the appointment of undersecretaries and political assistants.

Professor Chan Kin-man, a sociologist at the Chinese University, said he believed officials' performance in

handling the hostage crisis would help rebuild the government's credibility. "Unlike in the Sars epidemic during which Mrs (Betty) Tung [wife of then Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa] wore bio-protective clothing to visit residents, the scenes of chief secretary Henry Tang and other senior officials sobbing and comforting victims and their families give people the impression that they are not isolated from public sentiment," he said.

But Chan cautioned that a short-term image improvement might not boost people's trust in the administration in the long run. For example, people still had the common perception of a government which colluded with business, he said.

His view was shared by political scientist Professor Ma Ngok, from the

same university. "It will only do a little to help the government's image," Ma said. "After all, it is not a concrete policy measure. The incident is not directly related to the livelihood of the general public. In the long run, the government can only increase its popularity by implementing good policies."

Lawmaker James To Kun-sun, of the Democratic Party, said the government deserved credit for its efforts to help affected families and victims of the hostage bloodshed, but warned that it could suffer from a drop in popularity if it failed to handle subsequent investigations. "Now the government says it won't request taking part in the investigation," he said. "This will disappoint citizens."

League of Social Democrats legislator Wong Yuk-man, who travelled to Manila to assist victims' families, said he did not believe the government's handling of the tragedy would help improve its popularity.

"Did the government ever think about taking part in the negotiation [with the hijacker]?" he said. "Was it informed when the Philippine police decided to surround the bus?"

"Hours after Donald Tsang tried to call Aquino but did not get through, why didn't he seek to talk through Beijing?"



Betty Tung during Sars. Officials have been a lot less insulated during this latest crisis. Photo: SCMP Pictures

# Programmes on Philippines pulled

## Vivienne Chow

Television shows on the Philippines have been removed from schedules indefinitely to avoid upsetting people mourning the dead hostages.

Several television stations said they had already cancelled programmes recorded in the country and would not be filming there in the near future.

TVB has already apologised for running an episode of the travelogue *World Cafe Asia*, showcasing travel and dining in Manila, on its Pearl channel on Tuesday night.

It said yesterday it had sent a crew to the Philippines to film a TV drama four to five years ago but otherwise filming there had been rare, and it had no plans to do so again soon.

"For overseas location filming, we usually partner with a travel agent which sponsors the trips. It's been rare for us to go to the Philippines, and this country is not likely to be on our list in the near future," a spokesman said.

"Even if there is a sponsor insisting on filming in the Philippines, we must take into account whether it will be related to the content of the show,

and whether it will be in the interests of the people of Hong Kong," he said.

The Broadcasting Authority has received one complaint over Tuesday night's show and TVB said it had received about six from viewers. The spokesman said it was an imported programme and staff had erred in not paying attention to the content.

We are replacing it with another episode. We are concerned about the public's feelings

A spokesman for Cable TV, which has pulled an episode of *Food Court*

Cable TV has pulled an episode of *Food Court* scheduled to be shown on its Entertainment Channel on Saturday night.

A spokesman said the show, a travelogue promoting dining and travelling in the Philippines, would be postponed indefinitely.

"We made the decision on the night of August 23 when the tragedy happened. It is our own production but we are replacing it with another episode showcasing another city," said the spokesman. "We are concerned about the public's feelings."

ATV and NOW TV said they did not have any programmes about the Philippines in stock, and neither had plans to film in the country in the near future.

Phoenix TV public affairs chief Anthony Yuen has been suspended after criticising Hong Kong for overreacting and saying "China executed Donald Tsang Yam-kuen should not have called Philippine President Benigno Aquino as they were not on an equal footing."

Yuen, who has been a fixture of the station's weekday show *News Talk* since it was first aired in 2001, has been criticised heavily in internet blogs and on Facebook, after he made his remarks on Tuesday. Phoenix said Yuen's comments did not reflect the station's views. He was not on yesterday's show and it understood to have been suspended indefinitely.

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Headline: Hijacker set to be buried in his uniform

Byline: Irene Jay Liu in Tanauan, Batangas province, Philippines

Remarks: Manila Bus Tragedy

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"Will people in Hong Kong always hate us?," a cousin of Rolando asked. She worked in Hong Kong for nearly two decades and was hoping to attend the college graduation of her employer's son, which is four years away. "He's like a son to me, I took care of him when he was two weeks old. I'm worried I can't go back to Hong Kong. That's why I feel alone."

Meanwhile, Hong Thai Travel general manager Susanna Lau Mei-sze yesterday paid a visit to injured tour member Joe Chan Kwok-chu, 46, and quoted him as saying there were many questionable points in the incident, including that the gunman had sought to reclaim his suspended pension of a million pesos from the government. And he did not understand why the authorities ignored the request and caused the loss of so many lives, Lau said.

Caption: The body of Rolando Mendoza, dressed in his police uniform, lies draped in the national flag and surrounded by the trappings of his career in a chapel 160 kilometres from Manila. Photo: K.Y. Cheng

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