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Coroners (Amendment) Bill

Bill No. 26/2021.

Read the first time on 13 September 2021.

A BILL

i n t i t u l e d

An Act to amend the Coroners Act and to make a related amendment to the Infectious Diseases Act.

Be it enacted by the President with the advice and consent of the Parliament of Singapore, as follows:

Short title and commencement

1. This Act is the Coroners (Amendment) Act 2021 and comes into operation on a date that the Minister appoints by notification in the *Gazette*.

Repeal and re-enactment of section 12

2. Section 12 of the Coroners Act is repealed and the following section substituted therefor:

“Preliminary investigation by Coroner

12.—(1) As soon as possible after a death is reported to a Coroner, the Coroner is to make a preliminary investigation into the cause of and circumstances connected with the death, including whether the death was due to natural causes.

(2) In the preliminary investigation, a Coroner need not view the body, but may, if the Coroner thinks it necessary, do so —

(a) at the place where the body is lying, or any other place to which the body has been moved; or

(b) by a live video link, or by any other means that the State Coroner may approve which reasonably allows the Coroner to view and identify the body.

(3) If after the preliminary investigation, a Coroner considers that the death was due to natural causes and that it is unnecessary to hold an inquiry, the Coroner may issue an order under section 22 for the release of the body.”.

New section 17A

3. The Coroners Act is amended by inserting, immediately after section 17, the following section:

“Minister may issue certificate in certain cases

17A.—(1) Subject to subsection (5), where a reportable death has occurred and the Minister is satisfied that all of the following conditions are met, the Minister may issue a Minister’s certificate for the release of the body in respect of the deceased:

(a) the deceased —

(i) had sustained an injury, contracted a disease or suffered a condition, outside Singapore, that resulted or apparently resulted in his or her death; or

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(ii) was, immediately before his or her death —

(A) a current or former head of state of a foreign State;

(B) a current or former head of government of a foreign State;

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(C) a government minister of a foreign State;

(D) a government official of a foreign State;

(E) a spouse or child of a person mentioned in sub-paragraph (A), (B) or (C) or of a diplomatic agent of a foreign State;

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(b) a foreign State (called in this section the requesting State) makes a request in the prescribed manner for a Minister's certificate to be issued in respect of the deceased and gives any undertaking regarding the retention or transport of the body or any other matter that the Minister may require;

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(c) in the circumstances, and having regard to any undertaking given by the requesting State, it is not in the public interest for the provisions of this Act to apply or continue to apply in respect of the deceased.

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(2) In considering whether to issue a Minister's certificate, the Minister may —

(a) have regard to information from any investigation that has been or is being carried out by a forensic pathologist under section 16 on the cause of and circumstances connected with the death;

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