

Hey Hey Standard

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2,600 call off hunger strike

THE 2,600 Vietnamese refugees on board the Skyluck have decided to end their hunger strike five days after it began.

The hunger strike was called off after Marine Police officials held a meeting with Skyluck representatives.

A top Security Branch official will meet them again this afternoon during which he is expected to explain the difficulties the Government is facing with regard to finding them accommodation on land - one of their demands.

Sources said yesterday the Government's stand on the

Skyluck refugees had not changed. This means they will not be allowed ashore unless a typhoon hits Hongkong.

The sources said conditions on the ship were better than some of the camps or transit centres in which the refugees were now housed on land.

Shortly after yesterday's meeting, the refugees accepted the dry rations that had been kept on board a barge moored alongside the Skyluck since Saturday.

The refugees have since Wednesday refused to take hot meals sent to them.

The Skyluck sneaked into

Hongkong on February 7.

Meanwhile, some Chinese newspapers yesterday received copies of a letter, dated June 8, from the Skyluck refugees criticising the Government's decision to keep them on board and demanding the right to land and seek employment.

The refugees said they had arrived in Hongkong when the refugee population stood at 10,000 and had been barred from landing because there was no accommodation.

They charged that since then the Government had accommodated more than 40,000

refugees, yet they are still prevented from landing.

Describing this as most unfair, the refugees said their tolerance and patience was nearing breaking point. They said the mental stress on them was approaching a point beyond which they may not be responsible for their actions.

Meanwhile, another 250 Vietnamese refugees arrived yesterday on two junks.

The first batch, comprising 13 people, was found on board a wooden junk intercepted off Cheungchau. The second batch of 235, on a motorised junk, was intercepted off Lantao.