

Information Paper for Legislative Council
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Supplementary Note on
Flood Control and Prevention Strategy and Measures

Introduction

In the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works meeting on 13 June 2001, members requested the Administration to provide the following supplementary information -

- a) The work of the Task Force on Improvement of Drainage Systems
- b) Clearance of blockages in drainage systems during heavy rain
- c) Actions against unauthorised land use in the New Territories
- d) Cause of flooding in June 2001 and compensation
- e) Stabilisation of soil stockpiles near banks of River Indus

Task Force on Improvement of Drainage Systems

2. The Task Force on Improvement of Drainage Systems is led by the Secretary for Works. Other members include the Director of Drainage Services, the Director of Territory Development and the Director of Home Affairs. The Task Force met twice on 13 and 29 June 2001 and reviewed comprehensively the overall programme of the major flood protection projects. Upon completion in 2003 of the current major training projects for the midstream and downstream sections of the main river channels, the flooding problem in the Northern New Territories would be much improved.

3. The Task Force was also aware of members' concern expressed in the Panel Meeting on 23 April 2001 and in the PWSC meeting on 30 May 2001 about the speeding up of the flood prevention projects. The Government had in fact started a review on the existing project delivery procedures aiming to speed up the implementation of the remaining flood prevention projects so as to bring early solution to the flooding problem of the New Territories.

4. The Task Force was also noted that there had been delay in some of the current flood protection works at the midstream and downstream sections of River Indus. It asked the works department concerned to take appropriate measures to tackle the existing problem and to monitor the progress of works closely, ensuring that the critical channel works could be completed before the rainy season in 2003.

5. The Task Force also instructed the works departments concerned to implement short-term measures to reduce the risk of flooding in the Northern New Territories. Such measures would include: strengthening site supervision to ensure the smooth flow of existing river courses, enhancing communication with nearby residents and providing sufficient standby resources on site to ensure timely arrangement of flooding relief works within the works areas.

Clearance of Blockages in Drainage Systems during Heavy Rain

6. The Drainage Services Department (DSD) has implemented an on-going preventive maintenance programme for the existing public drainage systems. The DSD will strengthen such work before and during the wet season each year. During flooding emergencies, the DSD will activate an emergency co-ordination centre to deal with reports of flooding. An inspection team will be deployed to the location of flooding and carry out all possible immediate remedial works on the spot including removing of blockages in the drainage systems.

Actions against Unauthorised Land Use in the New Territories

7. The Planning Department is responsible for enforcement action under the Town Planning Ordinance against unauthorised uses of private land in rural New Territories. Proactive approach has been adopted aiming at channelling potential operators to relocate to legal permanent sites or to seek planning permissions to regularise their developments. The planning permissions granted by the Town Planning Board include, among other approval conditions, the requirement to provide drainage facilities to the satisfaction of the DSD. So far, the Planning Department has succeeded in causing the unauthorized use of 690 hectares of land to stop or to be regularised by planning permission. At the same time, a total of 476 prosecution cases were processed.

8. The Task Force (Black Spots) of the Lands Department is responsible for bringing forward environmental improvements to existing permitted land uses. In the drainage aspect, operators will be required to provide adequate drainage facilities in their lands to ensure that existing drainage systems in the vicinity are not adversely affected. Up till now, a total of 1626 blackspots covering about 207 hectares of land have been cleared.

Cause of flooding in June 2001 and Compensation

9. The DSD is now investigating into the cause of flooding that occurred in June this year. It will also assess whether the construction activities in the vicinity of the flooded areas may have aggravated the flooding. An independent expert will be invited to review the investigation report. The investigation findings will be made public and submitted to the Panel after the summer recess.

10. If certain contractors are found to be held responsible for the flooding, the Government will definitely request them to follow up any claims from those residents suffered losses as a result of the flooding and to make reasonable compensation to them on individual case basis according to the established procedures.

Stabilisation of Soil Stockpiles near Banks of River Indus

11. The excavated soil material stockpiled near banks of the River Indus are to be used in the permanent works as fill material. Both the Territory Development Department and its consultant have been very concerned of the stability of the stockpiles and urged the contractor to carry out necessary measures to avoid washout during heavy rains. **Annex A** contains copies of some of their relevant correspondences with the contractor issued in early this year. The contractor has completed stabilising measures for all the stockpiles.

Works Bureau

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