

立法會
Legislative Council

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Legislative Council
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Minutes of special meeting
held on Wednesday, 13 June 2001 at 9:00 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP (Chairman)
Hon LAU Ping-cheung (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members attending : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo

Members absent : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP

Public officers attending : **Agenda Item I**

Mr W S CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Works (Works Policy)

Mr J COLLIER
Director of Drainage Services

Mr T K CHEUNG
Deputy Director of Drainage Services

Mr KWONG Hing-ip
Chief Assistant Secretary for Works (Technical Services)

Mr T K TSAO
Project Manager
New Territories North Development Office
Territory Development Department

Mr H W CHEUNG
Deputy Project Manager
New Territories North Development Office
Territory Development Department

Mr C L NG
Chief Engineer (Tai Po/Northern District)
Territory Development Department

Mr W T YEUNG
Chief Engineer (Mainland North)
Drainage Services Department

Mr M H LEUNG
Senior Engineer (Land Drainage)
Drainage Services Department

Clerk in attendance : Miss Salumi CHAN
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)5

Staff in attendance : Mrs Queenie YU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)6

I. Flood control and prevention strategy and measures

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1517/00-01(01) — Extract of press coverage on flooding incidents for the period 8 June 2001 to 12 June 2001

LC Paper No. CB(1)1517/00-01(02) — Paper provided by the Administration)

The Chairman said that the purpose of the special meeting was for the Administration to brief members on the causes of the flooding incidents occurred in the period from 7 June to 11 June 2001, compensation for losses arising from the flooding incidents, and the flood control and prevention measures.

2. The Director of Drainage Services (D of DS) briefed members on the paper provided by the Administration. He said that the flooding incidents were caused by the exceptionally heavy rainfall occurred in various areas of the territory. In particular, the very intense rainfall had persisted for long periods of time in the New Territories (NT) which, together with the high tide, resulted in extensive flooding in the lowlying areas of North and North West NT. Most of the areas involved were flooding black spots covered by the flood prevention programme being implemented by the Administration. For North and North West NT, the Administration had spent \$2.7 billion on river training and village flood protection, and would spend another \$2.1 billion for further improvement works. It was envisaged that the situation would be much improved upon completion of the two major contracts for widening and training the middle reaches of the River Indus by 2003.

3. The Deputy Secretary for Works (Works Policy) (DSW) also advised that the Task Force on Improvement of Drainage Systems (Task Force) had been set up by the Administration to review the flood prevention programme, and explore ways to ensure progress of flood prevention projects and to alleviate the flooding problems in the interim. The Task Force headed by the Secretary for Works would meet for the first time later that afternoon.

Flooding incidents at various locations

Flooding incidents at Ngau Tam Mei and Kam Tin

4. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that he had visited the flooding areas in Ngau Tam Mei and Kam Tin the day before the meeting. According to the local residents, the flooding incidents in Ngau Tam Mei were caused by the blockage of water flow by temporary bridges constructed by the contractor while those in Kam Tin were caused by temporary flow diversions initiated by the contractor. Mr TAM urged the Administration to ensure that the contractor would take appropriate measures to avoid blockage of water flow by temporary works at construction sites. He also considered that the affected residents should be compensated for their losses. The Chairman shared his views.

5. D of DS assured members that the Administration would investigate into the causes of the flooding incidents. If it was established that certain contractors should be held responsible for the flooding incidents, the Administration would request them to follow up claims from the affected residents and to make reasonable compensation to them on individual case basis according to the established procedures. Nevertheless, it was premature at this stage to draw any conclusion. Mr TAM Yiu-chung requested the Administration to provide a report on the flooding incidents at Ngau Tam Mei and Kam Tin.

Flooding incidents at Tin Ping Shan, Sheung Shui

6. Referring to the flooding incidents in the flood plain of River Indus near Tin Ping Shan, Mr WONG Yung-kan expressed grave concern about the delay in the river training works for River Indus and queried whether the Administration had monitored the work of the contractor responsible for the project. According to the local residents, a number of sub-contractors were engaged in the project and the training works had been suspended from time to time. Whilst admitting delays in the river training works, the Project Manager of New Territories North Development Office of the Territory Development Department (PM/TDD) stressed that the Territory Development Department (TDD) had made conscious efforts to closely supervise and monitor the progress of the project. Apart from the bi-weekly meetings between TDD and contractor's staff at the working level, the Director of Territory Development also had frequent discussions with the contractor on the subject. He assured members that TDD and the consultant company would continue to urge the contractor to improve the situation.

7. Ir Dr Raymond HO Chung-tai considered that the milestones set for different phases of the works should be stipulated in the contract. If the contractor failed to meet the target dates or performed badly within a specified period of time, say within two years, the Administration should take appropriate action, such as taking over the project from the contractor. PM/TDD said that in view of the unsatisfactory progress of the river training works for River Indus, the Administration had considered taking over the project but finally decided not to do so because of the time required to complete the procedures for commissioning a new contractor and the need to avoid further delay. Mr LAU Ping-cheung asked whether the Administration had considered other options, such as taking over part of the project. PM/TDD advised that the Administration had considered several options but a decision had yet to be made. Responding to Mr LAU, PM/TDD advised that the project commenced in August 1999 for completion within 28 months. The contract period might however be extended because of the wet season. The current assessment was that the project would be completed by December 2002. As it would take another 16 months to complete the project, Mr LAU was concerned how similar flooding incidents could be avoided in the next wet season. PM/TDD said that the Administration would take

appropriate follow-up actions after the outcome of the investigation on the flooding incidents was available.

8. Mr WONG Yung-kan and Mr LAU Kong-wah said that they had visited the flooding areas in Tin Ping Shan and noted that there were soil material stockpiled near the banks of the River Indus. Mr WONG pointed out that the run-off sediments had flushed away the property of the fish-farm in the vicinity. He therefore considered that the operators of the fish-farm should be compensated for their losses. Referring to the photographs taken during the site visit, Mr LAU illustrated two unusual phenomena. Firstly, it was unusual that the field in the affected areas were flooded with soil material. Secondly, areas as far as Tai Po were also flooded. It would appear that the soil material stockpiled had collapsed during heavy rainstorms and therefore blocked the river channels and caused flooding. He queried whether the Administration or the contractor had taken any precautionary measures.

9. PM/TDD advised that the Administration had urged the contractor to take appropriate measures for stabilizing the soil material. The Deputy Project Manager of New Territories North Development Office of Territory Development Department (DPM/TDD) added that as the stabilization measures taken by the contractor were considered inadequate, both TDD and the consultant's engineer had repeatedly reminded the contractor to take remedial measures. Mr LAU Kong-wah asked whether TDD had conducted site inspections and issued any warning to the contractor for its failure to comply with the requirements. DPM/TDD said that to his understanding the contractor had finally carried out most of the required stabilization measures, except the one requiring the coverage of the soil material with canvas.

10. At the request of Mr LAU Kong-wah, PM/TDD undertook to provide the Panel with the following information -

- (a) follow-up actions taken by the Administration in monitoring the implementation of the stabilization measures recommended by the consultant, including correspondence between the Administration and the contractor; and
- (b) whether the contractor had breached the contract for not covering the soil material with canvas.

Flooding incidents at Kau Lung Hang, Tai Po

11. Responding to Mr LAU Kong-wah, D of DS said that the cause of flooding at villages at Kau Lung Hang was due to inadequate drainage capacity to cope with the intense rainstorms. Drainage improvement works to widen and straighten the existing natural watercourses were scheduled to commence in 2005 for completion in 2008. Funding approval had been sought in May 2001 for employment of consultants to carry out the detailed investigation and design of the proposed drainage improvement

works. The Chairman considered that the Administration should review the existing project delivery procedures for expediting the implementation of the remaining flood prevention projects.

Flooding incident at Pok Wai Village, Yuen Long

12. Referring to the flooding incident at Pok Wai Village on 7 June, Mr LAU Ping-cheung noted from press reports that the contractor's staff had only arrived at the site 11 hours after the flooding. The Deputy Director of Drainage Services (DD of DS) clarified that when the flooding incident occurred around 4:00 am to 5:00 am on 7 June, the villagers had tried to contact the contractor but in vain. They then contacted DSD at about 5:45 am. Upon receipt of the report, the Drainage Services Department (DSD) immediately contacted the contractor. The contractor's staff arrived at the site at about 7:30 am and operated the temporary pumps at about 8:00 am. The delay was about 2 to 3 hours. Nevertheless, the contractor had agreed to handle issues in relation to insurance and claims arising from the flooding incident, to improve the communication channel for the villages to contact its staff, and to arrange stand-by staff to be stationed on site overnight to deal with emergency situation during wet season.

13. To ensure timely arrangement of flooding relief works within works areas, Mr LAU Ping-cheung asked whether the Administration or the consultant company would also arrange staff to be stationed on site overnight to deal with emergency situation. D of DS responded that the majority of public works was delivered through consultant's engineers and resident site staff who were responsible for site management. DSW assured members that the Task Force would consider measures to strengthen liaison between the Administration and resident site staff especially at emergency situation. Ir Dr Raymond HO held the view that sufficient standby resources should be provided on site to ensure timely arrangement for flooding relief works within works areas.

Flooding incident at Belvedere Garden, Tsuen Wan

14. Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip said that according to the local residents, the flooding incidents at the Belvedere Garden from Saturday, 9 June to Monday, 11 June were caused by the blockage of the drainage catchpit at Fat Yip Lane next to Belvedere Garden. Referring to a site visit to the Belvedere Garden on 11 June, Mr CHAN pointed out that staff of DSD was still unable to apprehend the cause of flooding at that time. In his view, if the Administration had taken prompt actions to identify the cause and clear the blockage on 9 June, the flooding event would not recur on 11 June. DD of DS pointed out that staff of DSD could carry out clearance works only when it was safe to enter the culvert where the blockage occurred. The Senior Engineer (Land Drainage) of Drainage Services Department reported that following a meeting between DSD and the Water Supplies Department on Tuesday, 12 June, the matter was being followed up by the two departments.

Causes of flooding

15. Members expressed grave concern that the flooding incidents in June had been caused not only by heavy rainfalls but also human factors, such as temporary works constructed by contractors and blockage of drainage systems by debris. They criticized the Administration for having not properly monitored the contractors' works and not cleared the drainage systems. Mr Albert CHAN also considered that flooding incidents might also be caused by the unauthorized land use in rural areas in the NT region. Mr Andrew CHENG shared this view.

16. On members' concern that some of the flooding events were caused by temporary works constructed by contractors, D of DS reiterated that the Administration would investigate into the causes of the incidents and take appropriate follow up actions. Responding to Mr LAU Ping-cheung, PM/TDD advised that in general, temporary works were designed and proposed by contractors. In considering such a proposal relating to river training works, the consultant's engineer responsible for the project would seek the comments of DSD.

17. As regards members' concern that some of the flooding events were caused by blockage of drainage systems by debris, D of DS advised that DSD had implemented an on-going preventive maintenance programme for the existing public drainage systems and carried out clearance works of debris and leaves on a regular basis. At the request of Mr LAU Ping-cheung, D of DS undertook to provide information on the standing arrangements for clearing drainage systems/facilities against blockage during heavy rain.

18. D of DS also pointed out that at present, there was no evidence to substantiate that the problem of unauthorized land use in the NT region had caused any of the flooding events in June. Responding to Mr Andrew CHENG, DSW undertook to provide information on actions taken against unauthorized land use in NT.

Compensation for losses arising from flooding

19. Members considered that the affected residents/fish farmers should be compensated for their losses.

20. Responding to the Chairman, DSW undertook to provide a report on the flooding incidents occurred in June 2001 in Ngau Tam Mei, Kam Tin, Kau Lung Hang and Tin Ping Shan areas, covering the cause of flooding and compensation for losses arising from the flooding incidents.

Preventive measures against flooding

21. Responding to Mr LAU Wong-fat, D of DS confirmed that the Administration had devoted a lot of resources on regular and frequent inspections on flooding black

spots and works sites before the wet season. Conscious efforts had been made to ensure that existing drainage systems were at their best possible conditions. In view of the recurrence of the flooding problem every year, Miss CHAN Yuen-han questioned the effectiveness of the overall flood prevention strategy. She considered that the Administration should take positive actions to improve the situation. D of DS assured members that the existing flood prevention strategy was a good strategy up to international standards. The Administration would look into the management problems at individual works sites with a view to implementing improvement measures to rectify the situation.

22. Ir Dr Raymond HO considered proper and close supervision of temporary works during the implementation of river training works important to ensure that the drainage capacity in the vicinity of the works sites would not be reduced. He also considered that river training works should not commence in wet season and that the average time taken to apply for Environment Permits in accordance with the statutory requirements should be included in scheduling the works period by the Administration. D of DS pointed out that it was a practice for the works departments to avoid commencing projects in wet season.

Way forward

23. Members strongly urged the Administration to implement immediate measures to address the concerns raised at the meeting. D of DS said that one of the agenda items of the first meeting of the Task Force was to consider immediate and short-term measures to improve the situation. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the Panel with a copy of the report of the Task Force in due course.

(Post-meeting note: The supplementary information provided by the Administration were circulated to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1) 1695/00-01 on 5 July 2001, CB(1) 1857/00-01 on 2 August 2001 and CB(1) 2041/00-01 on 19 September 2001.)

II. Any other business

24. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:45 am.