

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2) 1614/01-02
(These minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 18 March 2002 at 8:30 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members Present** : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP (Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
- Members absent** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Public Officers Attending** : Item IV
Mrs Stella HUNG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment and Food (A)

Mr David LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food (A) 2

Mr W H CHEUK
Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr S P MAK
Deputy Director (Food & Public Health)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item V

Mrs Stella HUNG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment and Food (A)

Mr David LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food (A) 2

Mr W H CHEUK
Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mrs Marion LAI
Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
(Administration and Development)

Mr Kevin CHOI
Head, (Clean Hong Kong Office)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item VI

Mrs Stella HUNG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment and Food (A)

Mrs Ingrid YEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food (A) 1

Miss Lavinia TANG
Senior Treasury Accountant
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Clerk in Attendance : Mrs Constance LI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)5

Staff in Attendance : Ms Joanne MAK
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)2

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1327/01-02)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2001 were confirmed.

Action

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1326/01-02(01) and (02))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 22 April 2002 at 8:30 am -

- (a) Licensing of non-restaurant food businesses;
- (b) Itinerant hawker licence; and
- (c) Anti-mosquito campaign 2002.

3. The Chairman asked the Administration whether the investigation report on the recent avian flu outbreak would be available for discussion at the next regular meeting. He said that the Panel was also concerned about the measures to be introduced to enhance control of local chicken farms and the proposal of an insurance fund for the industry.

4. Deputy Secretary for the Environment and Food (A) (DS(EF)(A)) replied that the investigation team would report to the Secretary for the Environment and Food (SEF) in about six weeks time, i.e. around mid April 2002. The investigation report would include recommendations on how to improve the hygiene standards and facilities of local chicken farms. The Administration would provide a report on the findings of the investigation to the Panel. The Chairman said that the Panel would, on receipt of the investigation report, decide whether it should convene a special meeting to discuss the findings.

5. As regards the progress report on the developments of the recent avian flu outbreak requested by the Panel at the previous meeting, DS(EF)(A) said that she aimed at providing the progress report to the Panel before the end of the week. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the progress report as soon as possible.

6. The Chairman asked if the Administration would need to seek approval of the Finance Committee (FC) on the compensations to be made to the local farms for the slaughtered chickens in the recent avian flu outbreak. DS(EF)(A) replied that, as SEF had explained at the special meeting on 8 February 2002, Government was bound by law to make compensation for chickens slaughtered by order of the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation. As long as the amount of compensation was the same as that stipulated in law (i.e. \$30 per each slaughtered chicken), it was not necessary to seek FC's approval.

(Post-meeting note : The Administration has provided on 26 March 2002 an updated report on the recent chicken influenza incident and the improvement control measures taken and on 6 April 2002 a supplementary report. The two reports were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2) 1456/01-02(01) dated 26 March 2002 and LC Paper No. CB(2) 1538/01-02(01) dated 9 April 2002 respectively.)

Action

III. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

7. Members noted that no information paper had been received since the last meeting.

IV. Review on control of disinfection of fish tank water for keeping live seafood

(LC Paper No. CB(2) 1326/01-02(03))

8. At the Chairman's invitation, Deputy Director (Food & Public Health) (DD(F&PH)) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) briefed members on the Administration's paper on the review of control of fish tank water for keeping live seafood. She said that a Working Group had been set up to review the effectiveness of the existing control mechanism and to make recommendations on ways to improve the mechanism. The Working Group considered that establishing a new plant to provide centralised seawater supply was not financially viable. It was also of the view that control of the source of fish tank water should not be made mandatory and the seafood shop/stall operators should have a choice on the source of supply. DD(F&PH) informed members that based on the recommendations of the Working Group, FEHD had drawn up a set of revised guidelines for the operators, and sought their views on the revised guidelines in four briefing sessions organised in January 2002.

Regulation of seawater suppliers

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that on quality assurance of fish tank water, the Administration only recommended requiring seafood shop/stall operators to provide better filtration and disinfection system for their fish tanks, but there was no recommendation on the control of the source of fish tank water or seawater suppliers. He asked why the Administration did not adopt a two-pronged approach by regulating both seafood shop/stall operators and seawater suppliers. He suggested that a licensing system should be introduced to regulate seawater suppliers. Mr WONG Yung-kan also considered that the Administration should improve control of the quality of fish tank water at source, such as by preventing the suppliers from drawing seawater at locations where untreated sewage was discharged.

10. Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene) (DD(EH)) responded that the Administration did not propose to designate seawater supply spots because the Administration could not guarantee that the water quality of any designated spots was safe all the time. Legislation would also be required to introduce a licensing scheme for seawater suppliers. He pointed out that live seafood itself could be a vehicle for cholera transmission, and it would be difficult to pinpoint responsibility when the seawater in fish tanks was found contaminated. DD(EH) said that the provision of a properly installed and well-maintained filtration and disinfection system, together with good management practices, would provide better quality assurance of fish tank water.

Action

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed dissatisfaction that the current proposal did not recommend any regulatory control of seawater suppliers. He criticised the Administration for adopting double standards on this matter. He said that while the Administration proposed that the operators should have proper documentation on the cleansing and maintenance schedules of the filtration and disinfection system, seawater suppliers were not required to make similar arrangement. Mr CHEUNG considered with a licensing scheme for seawater suppliers, they could be required to keep record of the locations where they abstracted water. This would help ensure that the suppliers would not be abstracting seawater from locations near sewage outlet or at polluted places.

12. DD(EH) responded that the proposed improvement measures for seafood shop/stall operators were simple but effective. The operators needed not employ additional staff for keeping the records on the cleansing and maintenance of the filtration and disinfection system, as these were not complicated. DD(EH) further said that the Administration had consulted associations of fish stall operators and they in general had no objection to the proposed new measures.

13. DD(EH) explained that the Administration did not recommend introducing regulatory control of seawater suppliers mainly because of enforcement difficulties. He said that there were no resource implications for the current proposal, because Health Inspectors could include the checking of cleansing and maintenance records of the filtration and disinfection system in the fish shop/stall operators during regular inspections. However, as seawater suppliers were not currently subject to regular inspections, additional resources would be required to put in place such a system, which was not very effective neither. He said that since the Administration could already improve control of the quality of fish tank waters with the enhanced measures at retail level, he had reservations about introducing legislative control of seawater suppliers.

14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that when the subject matter was last discussed at the special meeting on 5 September 2001, members had suggested several options, such as centralised seawater supply, use of synthetic seawater and regulation of seawater suppliers. However, it seemed that the Administration had now eliminated all these options and only recommended control measures at the retail level. He cited the outbreak of avian flu as an example and pointed out that while the Administration had focussed its efforts at tightening control of chicken stalls, in the end it was found that the problems actually lay with the source, i.e. the chicken farms.

15. Dr YEUNG Sum said that he supported establishing a licensing system to regulate the seawater suppliers, so that they would be held responsible for contamination of the seawater supplied by him. He considered this a reasonable and enforceable measure. As to the current proposal of introducing enhanced measures at the retail level to ensure quality of fish tank water, Dr YEUNG considered that it inadequate if the Administration only issued guidelines for observance by the trade.

Action

Requiring suppliers to install filtration and disinfection facilities for the water tanks on their trucks for delivery of seawater

16. Mr WONG Yung-kan urged the Administration to tackle the problem at source, e.g. by designating places for drawing seawater, and imposing a mandatory requirement for installation of filtration and disinfection facilities for the water tanks on trucks used for delivery of seawater. He asked whether FEHD had discussed with the seawater suppliers on the disinfection of the water tanks on their trucks.

17. The Chairman asked whether FEHD had designated abstraction spots for seawater suppliers. DD(EH) replied that all along FEHD had not designated such spots. However, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) published information on locations where the quality of seawater was found better than in other places. He pointed out that, however, there was no guarantee that the water quality at these locations was always safe and suitable for suppliers to abstract water.

18. DD(F&PH) said that there were about ten to fifteen suppliers in Hong Kong supplying seawater mainly to restaurants, and they usually drew seawater in Sai Kung areas. There was daily rinsing and regular disinfection of their water tanks. She further said that the Working Group had met with six suppliers and they had expressed the view that a licensing system might not have any added value in quality assurance of fish tank waters. DD(EH) reiterated that enforcement and monitoring the operation of seawater suppliers would be very difficult. Moreover, contamination of the seawater could still occur after delivery to the retail outlets. Therefore, the Administration considered it more cost-effective in quality assurance of fish tank water by stepping up control at food premises and retail outlets. He added that each year, there were only a few fish tank water samples found to contain *Vibrio Cholerae*. The significant resource implications for introducing licensing control of the suppliers did not seem to be commensurate with the gravity of the problem.

19. The Chairman said that while he agreed that it was difficult for Government to designate supply locations, he shared some members' view that legislative control of the trucks used for delivery of seawater could be introduced. He said that the Administration could put in place a registration system for seawater suppliers and require them to install filtration and installation facilities for the water tanks on their trucks. He said that this would at least provide safeguard against contamination of fish tank water in the process of delivery.

20. Mr WONG Yung-kan pointed out that in Japan, it was mandatory to install such facilities for the water tanks on trucks used for delivery of live fish and that they were all room-sealed. He queried why Hong Kong could not introduce control of the disinfection facilities for the water tanks on these trucks.

21. DD(F&PH) reiterated that according to the suppliers, they also carried out regular cleansing and disinfection of the water tanks on their trucks. She explained that legislation would be required to make it a mandatory requirement for the installation of filtration and disinfection facilities on these trucks. Given the resource

Action

implications for enforcement and the possibility that contamination could still occur after delivery of seawater to retail outlets, the Administration was of the view that it would not be cost-effective to introduce such a mandatory requirement on seawater suppliers.

22. Dr LO Wing-lok said that it would be better to have the seawater disinfected before it was loaded onto the trucks, as it might be difficult to ensure that the disinfection was completed during the short transportation time.

The revised guidelines issued by FEHD

23. Dr LO Wing-lok asked whether operators would be subject to any penalty if they did not comply with the revised guidelines. DD(EH) replied that the Administration intended to make the documentation requirement a licensing condition, and the cleansing and maintenance records would be checked during the regular inspections by Health Inspectors.

24. Dr LO pointed out that many market stall operators kept live seafood in basins or containers rather than in fish tanks. He enquired how the requirement of installation of filtration and disinfection facilities could apply in these cases. DD(EH) replied that most of the seafood shops and stalls had already installed filtration and disinfection facilities, and the requirement should not pose a problem to the operators.

25. Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked whether the Administration considered that compliance with the revised guidelines would provide 100% guarantee to the quality of the fish tank waters. He was concerned whether an operator would still be held liable if the fish tank water in his shop/stall was found contaminated, despite full compliance with the revised guidelines.

26. DD(EH) said the Administration was not suggesting that compliance with the revised guidelines would guarantee that no contamination would occur to the fish tank water. He said that the revised guidelines aimed to give more detailed advice on the three common disinfection methods. He added that the requirements set out in the revised guidelines were reasonable and the additional operational costs incurred to the operators would be minimal. He pointed out that at present, only about 6% to 7% of the operators were found not meeting some minor requirements, such as improper installation of filtration and disinfection facilities and no regular maintenance of the systems, and these should be easily remedied.

27. The Chairman agreed that the revised guidelines were more detailed and clearer than the existing one. He noted from the revised guidelines that operators were required to replace the UV lamp once every six to nine months. He asked about the additional cost that would be incurred. DD(EH) replied that it would cost only about \$200 for replacing an UV lamp, and the total cost (including maintenance service) was about \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year.

Action

Centralised seawater treatment plant

28. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that at the special meeting held on 5 September 2001, he had conveyed to Panel members the trade's suggestion of establishing a centralised seawater treatment plant in which seawater could be filtered, disinfected and tested before delivery to food premises and retail outlets. Mr CHEUNG said that at that meeting, he had pointed out that if Government could provide the land for construction of the plant, the trade would be willing to pay for the operation cost. The trade had also suggested that the plant could be operated on an experimental basis first, and if it proved to be successful, the trade might also be willing to invest more in the capital cost for the provision of such a plant. He asked the Administration to explain in greater detail why it considered the option infeasible.

29. DD(F&PH) replied that the Working Group had also discussed with some suppliers on the suggestion, and had come to a view that the proposed plant might not be financially viable for the following reasons -

- (a) the capital cost for construction of the plant could be great; and
- (b) it was uncertain as to whether seawater suppliers would use the plant, because some suppliers might still prefer to maintain the existing mode of operation.

She said that the Administration would have to consider the viability and cost-effectiveness of providing such a plant before coming to a decision on it.

30. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed dissatisfaction with the Administration's explanation and considered that the Administration should at least give the suggestion a try. He pointed out that by providing such a plant, the Administration's control of the quality of fish tank water could be enhanced. He urged the Administration to reconsider the suggestion.

31. Dr YEUNG Sum commented that even with the provision of a centralised seawater treatment plant, suppliers might still prefer to abstract seawater which was free. He agreed that it would be difficult to compel the suppliers to use the water provided by a centralised seawater treatment plant. He also appreciated the difficulties for Government to designate supply locations as there were no such locations where the water quality was guaranteed safe and suitable at all times. Moreover, even if there were such designated locations, suppliers might complain that the locations were inconvenient. Dr YEUNG reiterated that he was in support of a licensing framework for seawater suppliers.

Tests of water quality

32. Mr Michael MAK asked whether restaurateurs could conduct their own tests to demonstrate that their fish tank water was of good quality so as to enhance the confidence of customers. DD(EH) responded that some restaurateurs had already

Action

commissioned private laboratories to conduct tests of the water in their fish tanks, and the cost of conducting such tests was about \$50 per water sample.

33. In response to Mr MAK, DD(EH) said that Health Inspectors also collected water samples from food premises and seafood shops for testing of E. Coli once every two months. If the presence of E. Coli in these samples were found to have exceeded the prescribed limit, further samples would be taken for E. Coli and Vibrio Cholerea tests. Normally, at least two water samples for Vibrio Cholerea tests were collected from each food premise and retail outlet a year.

Admin

34. Miss CHOY So-yuk queried why the current proposal had not made reference to findings of the regular tests conducted by EPD on water quality of different parts of Hong Kong waters. She requested the Administration to provide information on the level of water pollution at different locations. She also asked whether there were evidence or findings that coastal water was unsuitable to be used for keeping live seafood. She said that the information would facilitate members' consideration as to whether synthetic seawater should be used for the keeping of live seafood. DD(EH) responded that the Administration had provided such information for the meeting on 5 September 2001. He would provide the updated information to the Panel after the meeting.

Conclusion

Admin

35. The Chairman said that members in general supported introducing a licensing scheme for trucks used for delivery of seawater, and requiring the installation of filtration and disinfection facilities for the water tanks on the trucks. He asked the Administration to take into account members' views when formulating the policy on the matter.

V. Preparation for fixed penalty system for minor public cleanliness offences (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1326/01-02(04) and (05))

36. The Chairman informed members that the Secretariat had prepared a background paper (LC Paper No. CB(2) 1326/01-02(04)) on the subject for members' reference.

37. Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Administration and Development) (DD(A&D)) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the preparation and the plan for implementation of the fixed penalty system for minor public cleanliness offences. She also briefed members on the salient points in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2) 1326/01-02(05)).

38. DS(EF)(A) informed members that the Administration intended to submit the subsidiary legislation made under the Ordinance for scrutiny by LegCo in April 2002. She said that the subsidiary legislation was to specify the format of the fixed penalty notice and the manner of payment.

Action

39. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr Tommy CHEUNG and Dr LO wing-lok expressed support for the Administration's proposals for implementing the fixed penalty system. Dr LO said that he also supported the Administration's proposal that the fixed penalty system should come into operation in May 2002.

Unauthorised posting of bills and posters

40. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that unauthorised posting of bills and posters e.g. on walls outside banks, in places such as Mongkok, Causeway Bay and Yau Ma Tei, was serious. He asked whether the scope of the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness Offences) Ordinance (the Ordinance) would cover display of posters or bills at private buildings such as banks.

41. DD(A&D) replied that FEHD placed great emphasis on tackling unauthorised posting of bills and posters, which was also covered by the fixed penalty system. She said that since October 2001, FEHD had employed contract workers to remove those posters or bills which had been put up at government and private buildings without permission. FEHD had also tried to identify the beneficiaries of these posters or bills and institute prosecution against them. Under the fixed penalty system, a fixed penalty notice would be issued to the person who displayed the bills or posters without permission.

42. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether explicit consent of the building owners concerned would be required for FEHD to take enforcement against the unauthorised display of bills and posters at private premises. The Head of Clean Hong Kong Office (H/CHKO) of FEHD explained that owners of private premises would have to confirm that they had not authorised any person to put up any bills or posters on the outside walls of their premises. Without such clarification by the owners concerned, it would be difficult for FEHD to establish the case. He said that so far, there had not been much problem in obtaining clarification from the owners of the premises concerned.

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether the Administration would take the initiative to approach the owners of private buildings for such clarification in order to take enforcement action. H/CHKO replied that his colleagues in district offices often approached the relevant organisations such as banks to seek such clarification. He said that his colleagues also worked in collaboration with District Councils to identify blackspots and take enforcement action.

44. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked how the Administration would follow up cases where illegally displayed bills only showed the contact telephone number. DD(A&D) replied that the Administration would make every effort to trace the beneficiaries of such bills or posters, including making calls to the contact person as shown on the bills or posters.

Action

Admin

45. In response to Miss CHOY's concern about illegal bills on the authorised display boards and publicity banners, DD(A&D) said that the Administration would look into the circumstances and would see what courses of action could be taken in such cases.

Training of enforcement officers

46. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah asked whether the remedial courses for enforcement officers would include tests on the enforcement officers' knowledge of the fixed penalty system. Noting that the enforcement officers would include some non-officer grades, Mr LEUNG asked whether they would be given training to enhance their English and Putonghua proficiency.

47. DD(A&D) responded that the Administration attached great importance to the training of enforcement officers. She said that FEHD was conducting an assessment questionnaire based on real-life scenarios to evaluate the knowledge of enforcement officers about the fixed penalty system. Any officers found not familiar with the system would be required to attend the remedial course and they would be evaluated again after the course. If they still could not meet the required standard, they would be suspended from the enforcement duties in connection with the fixed penalty system. DD(A&D) further said while the language proficiency of the enforcement staff might vary, she was confident that they should have no problem with simple English and simple Putonghua conversation.

48. Mr WONG Yung-kan enquired whether regular or refresher training would be provided after the system had come into operation. DD(A&D) replied that remedial courses and experience sharing sessions would continue to be provided for enforcement officers after the fixed penalty system had come into operation and there would also be training courses for new appointees.

49. Referring to paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper, the Chairman expressed concern whether the training of 10 000 front-line enforcement officers could be completed before commencement of the fixed penalty system in May 2002, since only 270 staff had been trained so far. DD(A&D) clarified that the 270 staff were the trainers who were responsible for providing training to the enforcement officers in their respective departments. She confirmed that training of all the 10 000 front-line enforcement officers had already been completed.

Enforcement

50. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked whether the system would cover tourists. DD(A&D) replied that tourists or visitors were also subject to the laws of Hong Kong including the fixed penalty system. She said that the enforcement officers were proficient both in Chinese and English and they would have no problem in explaining the relevant provisions to the tourists or visitors, including the procedures for paying the fixed penalty.

Action

51. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the situations where people might give the excuse that they had not littered but had just placed their belongings at the place for a short while. He also asked about the enforcement at places such as the ground floor of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Building in Central, which was accessed by members of the public.

52. DD(A&D) replied that it was difficult to give hard and fast rules, and the enforcement officers would take into account the circumstantial factors. As to the definition of public place, DD(A&D) said that it was provided in the law and also in the enforcement guidelines. Should enforcement officers have doubts in enforcement, they could seek advice from their supervisors.

53. H/CHKO added that generally speaking, areas accessible by members of the public should be regarded as public places, and these places were therefore within the scope of the fixed penalty system. However, there were cases where the management of common areas of buildings were vested with a corporation and such places were not regarded as public places. Nevertheless, he did not envisage much problem in this respect as the frontline enforcement officers were experienced and familiar with places in their respective districts. H/CHKO further said that if a person was seen putting rubbish on the ground in a public place, he could be charged of littering. He said that the front-line officers had accumulated much experience in instituting prosecutions against littering and they should not have great problems in enforcing the fixed penalty system.

54. Miss CHOY So-yuk considered that the Administration should provide clear enforcement guidelines on those situations as described by Mr Tommy CHEUNG. The Administration noted the comments.

55. The Chairman expressed concern about the enforcement of the fixed penalty system in those public housing estates where the management had been contracted out to private management companies. As the Housing Department (HD) had even closed its offices in these public housing estates, he queried how HD staff could carry out effective enforcement in these estates. The Chairman pointed out that only a few grades in HD, namely the Housing Manager, Assistant Housing Manager and Housing Officer, were authorised to enforce the fixed penalty system. He was concerned that there might not be sufficient HD staff to carry out effective enforcement in public housing estates.

56. DD(A&D) responded that for those housing estates where the management had been contracted out, HD would conduct regular inspections to the estates to check cleanliness. She said that FEHD would also maintain close liaison with HD to see whether there would be any particular enforcement problem in public housing estates.

57. Dr LO Wing-lok suggested that the Administration should make use of the fixed penalty system to improve cleanliness of country parks, especially the barbecue sites. DD(A&D) agreed to follow up. Miss CHOY So-yuk also suggested that the Administration should strengthen enforcement especially in places such as parks to

Action

achieve deterrent effect. DD(A&D) noted the suggestions.

Community support

58. Mr WONG Yung-kan asked what action would be taken by the Administration to solicit community support for the implementation of the fixed penalty system. DD(A&D) responded that FEHD's Clean Hong Kong Office had established good cooperation with the District Clean Hong Kong Committees in each district. She said that SEF had also exchanged views with the chairmen of the 18 District Clean Hong Kong Committees on the implementation plan for the fixed penalty system. DD(A&D) further said that major publicity programmes would be launched jointly with these district committees before the fixed penalty came into force in May 2002.

Public education and publicity

59. Mr Michael MAK said that although the Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign had been launched for almost 30 years, it seemed that not much improvement had been made to the environment. He considered that the Administration should do more in public education to promote awareness of the importance of environmental cleanliness. He said that very often after events like the firework display during the Lunar New Year, lots of rubbish was left behind on the ground. Moreover, many people littered in places such as Causeway Bay and it seemed that Government just did not have sufficient manpower to take action against littering. He suggested that more refuse bins should be provided in busy areas with high pedestrian circulation.

60. DD(A&D) responded that the Administration would step up publicity, in particular a few days before large-scale events were held, to remind people that they should throw rubbish into rubbish containers provided at the venue of the event. The Administration would also take note of the need to provide sufficient refuse containers at the venues of public events.

61. DS(EF)(A) added that the Administration had all along placed great emphasis on public education. She said that in addition to launching publicity conveying "Clean Hong Kong" messages, FEHD had, in collaboration with the Home Affairs Department (HAD), stepped up publicity efforts to promote environmental hygiene on a district basis, and reach out to students and produce teaching materials (such as leaflets and audio-visual materials) for viewing at schools. HAD had recruited voluntary "Clean Hong Kong Ambassadors" and part-time front-line workers to form special task force teams in the districts to carry out a wide range of activities to promote the Clean Hong Kong programme.

62. DS(EF)(A) further said that the initial stage of publicity on the fixed penalty system had commenced in September 2001. To alert people to the impending fixed penalty system, large-scale publicity programme would be launched around May 2002. She stressed that the object of the Ordinance was to disseminate the Clean Hong Kong messages rather than just to penalise offenders under the Ordinance.

Action

63. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah expressed concern that the term "minor" public cleanliness offences might be misleading. DD(A&D) responded that the Administration was not going to use the term "minor" public cleanliness offences in its publicity materials but would use clear terms that was easy to understand.

64. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked about the Administration's plan to publicise the fixed penalty system to tourists and visitors. She also asked whether the publicity materials would be in different languages, and whether simplified Chinese characters would be used. DD(A&D) replied that the Administration's publicity efforts would take into account the need to make tourists and visitors in Hong Kong aware of the fixed penalty system and would cover the airport and railway stations.

Evaluation of effectiveness of the fixed penalty system

65. Mr Michael MAK asked how the Administration was going to assess the effectiveness of the fixed penalty system. DS(EF)(A) replied that FEHD was conducting a survey to collect opinions on the cleanliness of the city environment, and the respondents would be surveyed again on the same subject six months after commencement of the system. The findings would be taken into account by FEHD in assessing the effectiveness of the fixed penalty system.

VI. Animal Trading Licence fee review
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1326/01-02(06))

66. DS(EF)(A) said that at the request of the Subcommittee on Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Amendment) Regulation 2001, Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Animal Traders) (Amendment) Regulation 2001 and Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2001, the Administration had conducted a review on the cost for issuing licence for animal traders and explored the possibility of a fee adjustment. She explained that the Administration's review had found that, due to streamlined procedures and improved efficiency, there was room for reduction in fee for animal trading licence. The Administration now proposed to reduce the current amount of fee for issue of animal trading licence from \$3,235 to \$2,670.

67. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the proposed reduction of fee. However, he considered that there was still scope for further reduction of the fee. He said that the live poultry trade had expressed the view that the Animal Trading Licence should be reduced as they were no longer allowed under the law to sell francolins, teals and quails. Since the number of items of live poultry that were allowed to be sold was reduced by half (from six to three items), the amount of the licence fee should be reduced by 50% correspondingly.

68. DS(EF)(A) explained that although the number of items of live poultry that the traders were permitted to sell had been reduced, the licensing process for the issue of the licence remained the same. As the work involved in processing and issuing the

Action

licence had not been reduced, the Administration could not agree to the trade's suggestion.

69. In response to the Chairman, DS(EF)(A) said that the amount of fee for the issue of animal trading licence was calculated on the basis of full cost recovery.

70. The Chairman asked whether the Administration would further streamline the licensing procedures so that the fee for other licences could also be reduced. DS(EF)(A) replied that FEHD was conducting a review of the procedures for the issue of various licences and the possibility of fee adjustments would be considered in the light of the outcome of the review.

71. The Chairman concluded that the Panel welcomed the Administration's proposal of fee reduction for the issue of animal trader licence.

VII. Any other business

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
18 April 2002