

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2252/01-02
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 23 May 2002 at 8:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** :
- Hon IP Kwok-him, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Deputy Chairman)
 - Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
 - Hon NG Leung-sing, JP
 - Hon James TO Kun-sun
 - Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
 - Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
 - Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
 - Hon CHOY So-yuk
 - Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
 - Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
 - Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
 - Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
 - Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Members Absent** :
- Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
 - Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
 - Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
 - Hon MA Fung-kwok

**Public Officers:
Attending**

Item IV

Mr W K LAM, JP
Secretary for Home Affairs

Mr NG Sek-hon, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3)

Ms Eva TO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Recreation
and Sport)

Mr HO Wing-him
Acting Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Mr Johnny W M WOO
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Mr Charles CHU
Chief Recreation and Sport Officer (Sports Policy Review)

Item V

Mr Leo KWAN Wing-wah, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Mr John DEAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home
Affairs (7)

**Clerk in
Attendance** : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

**Staff in
Attendance** : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2004/01-02]

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2002 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted the progress report on the implementation of recommendations arising from the District Councils Review provided by the Administration [LC Paper No. CB(2)1653/01-02(01)]. Members also noted the draft code of practice entitled "The use of personal data in employer/employee relationships" issued by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in the United Kingdom, and the report on the survey of data users conducted in 2001 provided by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data [LC Paper NO. CB(2)1730/01-02(01)].

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1999/01-02]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Friday, 14 June 2002 at 10:45 am -

- (a) Rural elections; and
- (b) Supervision of the Chinese Temples Committee.

4. Responding to the Chairman, Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) said that subject to members' views, items three and four on the list of discussion items for future meeting of the Panel, i.e., the role and functions of the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (SDB), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), and the various national sports associations (NSAs) in the development of sport in Hong Kong, and the work of SDB were closely related to the Review Report on Sports Policy (the Report). In this connection, members agreed that discussion of these two items should be incorporated in the discussion of the Sports Policy Review.

5. Ms Cyd HO referred to the Police operation on 25 April 2002 during which two media reporters were handcuffed for refusing to move to the designated area for use by the press. To her knowledge, the Police would review its guidelines on media coverage, and some media associations would like to express views on the

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issue before the Police's review was completed. Ms HO therefore suggested that the Panel should follow up the issue from the perspective of press freedom. She added that the Panel might hold a joint meeting with the Panel on Security as the issue was also related to the purview of the Panel on Security. At the Chairman's suggestion, members agreed that subject to the agreement of the Chairman of the Panel on Security, the Panel would discuss the issue at its regular meeting in July 2002 or at a joint meeting with the Panel on Security, if the Administration was ready to provide paper for discussion.

IV. Sports Policy Review

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1999/01-02(01)]

6. Members noted that the Administration had tabled the Report of the Sports Policy Review Team at the meeting which would be released for public consultation until 31 July 2002 at a press conference to be held in the afternoon of the same day.

7. At the Chairman's invitation, SHA briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper on "a strategic policy for sports development" with the aid of power-point presentation.

Administrative structure for sport

8. Mr Andrew CHENG expressed reservations about the recommendation to establish a Sports Commission to oversee the future development and implementation of sports policy as it was not empowered to determine allocation of funds to the sports sector. He pointed out that like the State Sports General Administration under the State Council in the Mainland, most overseas countries had appointed an authority at the highest level to oversee the planning and co-ordination of sports development. He considered the controversies about unfair allocation of resources to NSAs had adversely affected the development of sports in Hong Kong. The Administration should face up to the problem of intense competition for limited fund by establishing a top level body with substantial authority in allocation of resources to oversee the development of sports and related matters. Mr CHENG pointed out that upgrading the status and authority of SDB by legislation and improving its funding mechanism might be a better alternative than to establishing a Sports Commission to resolve the existing conflicts among NSAs.

9. In response, SHA explained that the major problem with the current administrative structure for sport was the lack of a clear central authority responsible for overall policy, planning, coordination and monitoring of sports

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development. It would not be appropriate for Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), i.e., government officials to take on such a role alone. The key task of the proposed over-arching Sports Commission would be to draw up and oversee the implementation of the strategic policy for sports development, as well as to advise on major policy and funding decisions regarding development priorities and elite training. The Administration had no intention to set up another independent body with authority to determine its own funding policies. The administrative mechanism for receiving, processing and approving of funding applications from the sports sector had yet been determined. The funding body might be put under HAB, LCSD or other relevant organisations. SHA stressed that approval for funding applications should follow the strategic policies formulated in accordance with the advice of the Sports Commission. SHA acknowledged the existing controversies and conflicts arising from competition for resources within the sports sector. He assured members that the Administration would take the necessary precaution to avoid recurrence of the same situation. As the Report had pointed out, although upgrading SDB to become a Sports Commission would involve minimal changes to the existing administrative set-up, such upgrading would not address the overlap and confusion with regard to the functions of LCSD and SDB. In addition, there was also the risk that such Commission, as an expanded SDB, would lack a clear identity of itself which was necessary for it to command a leading and coordinating role in the sports sector.

10. Mr Andrew CHENG said that while the recommendation was proposed along the right direction, he did not consider that setting up the Sports Commission as proposed would address the problem. He pointed out that it was essential for the Sports Commission to have the powers to determine and implement the criteria for allocation of funds for successful implementation of the strategic policies for sports development in the future. It was his preliminary view that the role of SDB should be expanded and upgraded to a Sports Commission if there were appropriate reform measures to increase its transparency, improve its accountability and expand its authority in allocation of sport resources.

11. Mr James TO questioned the need to overhaul the administrative structure for sports radically by establishing a Sports Commission and dissolving SDB. He also queried that such a move was not in line with the spirit of the proposed system of accountability, under which principal officials should assume overall responsibilities in different policy areas. He suspected that the move aimed to pave the way for reconfiguration of the authorities in the sports sector so that the relevant principal official would have a free hand in the appointment of members to the Sports Commission. Sharing a similar concern, Mr Andrew WONG asked how the membership of the future Sports Commission would be determined. He considered that members of the Sport Commission would have a substantial influence on distribution of sports resources within the sports sector.

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12. SHA responded that the Administration had no hidden motive in proposing the establishment of a Sports Commission. He pointed out that similar overarching advisory bodies had been established in other policy areas such as the Education Commission which was a non-statutory body established to advise on the development of strategic directions and policies in the field of education and had collaborated with the Education and Manpower Bureau in policy formulation and implementation in an effective manner. He stressed that the proposal of setting up a Sport Commission was put forward to address the concerns of the sports community that the existing administrative structure for the sports sector was ineffective. As regards the membership of the Sports Commission, SHA said that the Administration did not consider it appropriate to determine the membership of the Sports Commission whilst the consultation was in progress, although apparently it should comprise representatives from major NSAs, related sport professionals and government bureaux and departments.

Promoting an active sporting culture

13. Dr TANG Siu-tong noted that the Report proposed, among others, greater emphasis on district level participation in sport such as organising a multi-sports inter-district games with District Sports Associations (DSAs) in the 18 Districts. He asked how the Administration would provide funding support for local communities to meet the staff and administrative costs incurred in organising sport activities. He also asked whether the Administration would consider setting up a central fund to sponsor DSAs and local communities in sports activities at the district level, in a way similar to the operation of the Sports Aid for the Disabled Fund. Dr TANG added that apart from sports activities, the Administration should consider funding support for DSAs and local communities to organise training programmes for student athletes as well.

14. SHA responded that local communities in need of financial support for organisation of sport activities should submit their proposals to respective District Councils (DCs) or LCSD for consideration. Currently, DSAs were receiving funding from DCs and LCSD to support their sports activities. In the 2000-01 financial year, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) had provided about \$10.8 million to the 18 DCs for subventing local organisations to promote sports activities in the district and about \$1.9 million to 19 DSAs to help meet their administrative expenses. Funding support for local international events organised by NSAs would also be considered by SDB on the basis of sports development or by LCSD on the basis of sports promotion. In 2000-01, SDB had allocated \$77 million in regular subventions to some 50 NSAs to assist them to pay their staff and administrative costs. SHA stressed that the Administration aimed to enhance efficiency in utilisation of sports facilities and resources, and simplify the

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administrative procedures for processing of funding applications and booking of sports venues, etc. The Administration had no intention to reduce funding support for "high performance" and "sports for all" sports programmes.

15. Mr WU King-cheong expressed support for promoting an active sporting culture in Hong Kong. He asked how the Administration would make use of DSAs and community sports clubs to help promote an active sporting culture in the community.

16. Acting Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (D of LCSD(Atg)) responded that to encourage more people to invest in a healthier lifestyle and to acquire new skills that would enrich their lives, LCSD would adopt a more proactive approach in promoting public sports programmes. LCSD would take the lead to collaborate with NSAs to develop community sports clubs on specific types of sports in certain districts, and organise district-based and inter-district programmes and competitions to enhance local-level participation in sports. Given their experience and local knowledge, DSAs could work in partnership with DCs and local-level groups and organisations to mobilize residents to take part in district-based activities and create a potentially wider client base for sports initiatives aimed at increasing levels of participation. To facilitate organization of sports activities, NSAs and community sports clubs would be given priority in booking of sports venues and facilities, as well as special discounts in charges as appropriate.

17. Ms Emily LAU noted that the Sports Policy Review Team had not recommended additional allocation of recurrent funding but suggested to re-balance and redeploy the global recurrent allocation for sports and recreation (\$2.43 billion in the financial year 2000-01, of which \$2.2 billion was allocated to LCSD's recreation and sports programmes). She asked how the Administration would redeploy the resources to promote an active sporting culture in Hong Kong and encourage parents to let their children undergo intensive training in specific sports. She also asked how Hong Kong compared with overseas countries in terms of total resources allocation for sports.

18. SHA explained that the allocation of \$2.2 billion to LCSD was largely spent on the provision of both sports and recreational programmes and facilities in Hong Kong. Around 60% of this allocation was used in sports, and about 90% of which was spent on the management of more than 800 public sports venues and facilities which were patronized by some 40 million man-times in 2000-01. As regards student participation in sports, SHA considered that the fostering of a sporting culture in schools and the community would take time. He pointed out that the situation that parents did not prefer their children to engage in sports was changing and more parents, particularly parents who were former athletes, were

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now willing to let their children participate in sports training outside school hours. He also pointed out that the creation and appearance of sports "idols" in local sporting world would have a positive impact on students' participation in sports. SHA hoped that the consultation on sports policy would help establish the major strategic directions for promoting a sporting culture in the community, in which the stakeholders including parents, principals and coaches would be enthusiastic about student participation in sports.

19. Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered that the Report had not recommended specific initiatives and measures for the development of an active sporting culture in the longer term. SHA explained that the purpose of the Report was to set out the options available for sports development in the future. The Administration would consider the views of the community before mapping out the future direction and policy initiatives for sports development.

Planning, design and management of public sports venues

20. Mr WU King-cheong suggested that the Administration should plan for the provision of sufficient public sports venues with appropriate ancillary facilities to promote "sports-for-all" programmes through the participation of DSAs and community sports clubs. He also suggested that LCSD should adopt a more proactive and innovative approach in management to enhance the attractiveness of public sports venues. Mr WU cited the football pitch at Siu Sai Wan to illustrate that management of public sports venues and facilities should adopt a more client-oriented approach, and the provision of diversified ancillary services such as sufficient car parks in the vicinity were equally important.

21. D of LCSD(atg) said that the Administration would adopt a more user-friendly approach in managing public sports venue and had set aside some \$8.7 billion to construct a total of 64 public sports and recreational projects for implementation within the next five years. The provision of facilities in these projects would be planned in the light of prevailing requirements of the community. In drawing up proposals for the implementation of these sports and recreational projects, LCSD would not only consider the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, but also issues such as the population structure of a given area, usage patterns for existing facilities, availability of similar venues operated by the private sector and the relative location and physical characteristics of the area in question. He added that LCSD would also consider modifying the design of existing public sports facilities to cater for additional facilities to meet the prevailing needs of the community.

22. Mr WU King-cheong remarked that LCSD should plan the schedule for provision of public sports venues to balance the demand and interest of different

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NSAs, community sports clubs and individuals, etc. PAS(HA)RS responded that NSAs and community sports clubs could help balance the interests of different groups in the utilisation of public sports venues by cooperation and appropriate coordination of their sports activities. She pointed out that community sports clubs were not only intended for people wishing to compete or to play at a high standard. Rather, they could also cater for people of all ages and levels of ability, from those who were looking to take part in tournaments and competitions to people who simply wished to practise sport for interest or exercise in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. As in Denmark and Sweden, such clubs could foster regular social contact among members and encourage an interest in sport in the community.

23. Mr NG Leung-sing asked how the Administration would plan the construction and utilization of a new 50 000 seats stadium in South East Kowloon and a new 5 000 – 10 000 seats multi-purpose indoor arena in Lai Chi Kok, West Kowloon to replace respectively the Hong Kong Stadium and Queen Elizabeth Stadium.

24. SHA responded that there was a strong case for Hong Kong to develop more modern major venues over the next ten years. These venues should be planned to meet international standards for at least twenty to thirty years. As such, there should be a large sports complex center around a high quality multi-purpose stadium with a wide range of ancillary and entertainment facilities inside the complex or in the vicinity. The proposed stadium in South East Kowloon Development should be the focus of a sports complex that would provide a range of sports facilities for regular community use, as well as retail and dining establishments and other indoor sports and entertainment facilities which altogether would stimulate the growth of a lively urban locale centred on the sports complex. In order to benefit from the greatest possible range of expertise in venue design and management, the private sector would also be invited to participate in the delivery and management of public sports facilities.

25. Mr WU King-cheong asked whether appropriate public transport facilities had been planned for the proposed development of major sports facilities in South East Kowloon Development and West Kowloon. PAS(HA)RS responded that the provision of mass transit facilities had been planned for the construction of a new sports complex in South East Kowloon Development and a new arena for indoor sports in Lai Chi Kok, West Kowloon.

26. Mr WU King-cheong expressed concern about the cost-effectiveness of the development of temporary public sports venues on unused sites. PAS(HA)RS responded that the aim of constructing temporary venues on unused sites was to make better use of sites designated for future sports facilities which were not

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scheduled for early development. These temporary facilities would serve to meet urgent needs in certain districts and provide more diversified sports facilities.

Sports for students and youths

27. Dr TANG Siu-tong noted that the Administration would endeavour to provide greater recognition to student athletes who had excelled in sport. He considered that the Administration should provide assistance to these students in academic pursuits such as personal tuition for student athletes who might perform less well in schools or universities due to intensive training for achieving sporting excellence.

28. SHA responded that the development of a supportive community culture in recognition of outstanding sporting performance was beginning to take shape. The Administration would continue to encourage tertiary institutions to consider the achievements of brilliant student athletes in their admission system. This was in fact one of the best ways to give recognition to young athletes. SHA pointed out that enrolment of outstanding student athletes in universities was a common practice in North America, and universities in Hong Kong had also started to make special arrangements to admit students with good sporting potentials or achievements in recent years. He added that many potential student athletes also excel in academic achievements.

29. Members noted that the Report had suggested that weekly physical education time in school curriculum should be increased from two to three sessions of 30 - 40 minutes each to enhance student participation in sports. Mr WU King-cheong considered that apart from increasing the number of lessons, physical education in schools should provide diversity and training to help potential students to develop their strengths in sport. As regards assistance to student athletes, Mr WU suggested that in addition to intensive training in sport, elite training programmes should incorporate areas of studies which would enable student athletes to gain enrolment to university studies.

30. Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Recreation and Sport) (PAS(HA)RS) responded that naturally most athletes would prefer to develop a career within the sport field after retirement. Currently, there were sport-related programmes offered by the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Baptist University for young athletes to develop a career in their fields of interest. The Administration would also liaise with the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education for the provision of sub-degree programmes such as coach training and sports science and medicine, etc., to meet the needs of athletes. Such educational and career planning for full-time athletes would be

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incorporated in an "Athletes' Plan" as proposed in paragraph 7.27(3) of the Report.

31. Mr Tommy CHEUNG pointed out that promotion of a sporting culture in school was restricted by the scarcity of land resources in Hong Kong. SHA agreed with Mr CHEUNG's view, saying that construction of school estates with more sports facilities to be shared among the schools might help address the problem.

32. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked whether the Administration would review the role and effectiveness of the Ti Yi (體藝中學) in the development of student athletes in secondary school education. SHA responded that the Administration had not conducted a review in this area. However, the fact that Ti Yi had become more or less a grammar school had demonstrated that at the current stage of sport development, the demand for high performance training programmes in secondary school education was insignificant. Therefore, the Administration considered it more appropriate to reinforce physical education in schools, and select potential student athletes in secondary schools who were willing to attend intensive training for further development.

High performance sport

33. Dr TANG Siu-tong expressed concern about the livelihood of elite athletes after retirement from competitive sports. He pointed out that most outstanding sportsmen and women would have to concentrate on achieving sporting excellence, many of them might fail to plan for a living after retirement. Dr TANG suggested that the Administration should provide appropriate financial support to high performance athletes upon their retirement from high-level competition, particularly those who had major achievements in the international sports arena.

34. SHA responded that the Administration considered it more appropriate to assist elite athletes to develop a career rather than to provide some lifelong welfare benefits upon their retirement from competitive sports. Apart from intensive training, Government should provide appropriate guidance and counseling to reduce psychological stress for individual elite athletes. SHA admitted that under the current level of economic development and activities, high performance athletes in Hong Kong did not have a similar level of recognition and commercial interests as their Mainland or western counterparts. Given the current social and economic developments, the Administration would concentrate on helping athletes to lead a self-sufficient life after retirement. To this end, the Report proposed the integration of the current range of support services into an "Athletes' Plan" for training and development of full-time elite athletes to achieve sporting excellence as well as the necessary skills for self-reliance. If supported by the community as a whole, the Plan would provide participating full-time athletes with a

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comprehensive scheme which should comprise the provision of intensive training in sport and guidance on education and career developments.

35. Mr NG Leung-sing asked how Hong Kong would enhance her ties with the Mainland for the development of elite athletes. SHA responded that contact and cooperation with the Mainland authorities so far concentrated on exchange of training opportunities for Mainland athletes at HKSI and local athletes in the Mainland. Given the impressive performance of Mainland athletes in major international sporting events, local coaches, athletes and technical professionals could learn a lot from their valuable experience in development of sporting excellence from such training opportunities. The Administration would also facilitate further collaboration and exchanges of views between local NSAs and Mainland sports authorities, clubs and related professionals in different areas of sports development.

36. Mr Andrew WONG suggested that public funding for high performance sports should be separated from the total allocation of sports resources for general sports for community participation. SHA agreed with Mr WONG's suggestion. He said that government subvention to SDB for training of elite athletes was about \$195 million in the 2000-01 financial year. As many countries had operated a "Sports Lottery" to support sport, it might be worthwhile to consider running a "Sports Lottery" a few times a year to create a stable source of income for elite sports.

Support for disabled athletes

37. Mr WU King-cheong said that he agreed that the Administration should provide more support for disabled athletes and give more recognition to disabled athletes who had performed outstandingly in major international competition events. Ms Emily LAU asked why high performance athletes could not achieve a similar level of success as their disabled counterpart in international sports competitions. SHA agreed that disabled athletes had major achievements in international sports competitions in recent years. He considered that apart from disabled athletes themselves, recognition should be given to SF&OC, SDB and relevant NSAs and sports associations, and a large number of volunteer officials and helpers who had participated in the coordination and provision of supporting services for disabled athletes. The Government's support in this respect was not significant in the past. The Report therefore had recommended various measures to enhance the support for disabled athletes.

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Investing in sporting future

38. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he agreed that there were problems with the current administrative structure for sports and just a change of personnel might not address the problem. He also remarked that when it came to distribution of limited sporting resources to a large number of NSAs of different streams of sports, the role of a funding controller was inevitably controversial. SHA responded that it was unlikely that public resources for sports would increase in the next five years. The Administration would have to explore the feasibility of creating new sources of funds such as a "Sports Lottery" for the sports sector.

39. Mr NG Leung-sing noted that the Administration would continue to invest in sports development in order to raise the profile of sport at all levels within the community as well as to gain wider recognition and create new opportunities for economic growth. He asked about the major sports which should be focused for development at an international level. He also enquired about the accompanying benefits of an active sporting culture and high performance sports to the community.

40. SHA responded that the elite training programmes run by SDB covered thirteen "focus" sports, namely, athletics, badminton, cycling, fencing, rowing, squash, swimming, tennis, ten pin bowling, triathlon, table tennis, windsurfing and wushu. There had been views within the sports community on the need to review the distribution of sports resources so as to give equal weight to both medal-winning sports and widely-played sports. As regards the direct economic significance of sport, SHA said that the positive impact of sport, in terms of consumer expenditure, employment and value added to the economy of the community with a high level of participation had been proved in a number of overseas research studies. The development of sport at the high performance level would help boost the travel and tourist industry as well as the media industries. The construction of new sport facilities and the renovation and upgrading of existing sports venues and their ancillary facilities would provide further business opportunities.

Way forward

41. Ms Emily LAU suggested that the Chairman should move a motion on the Report for debate in the current session, given the importance of the sports policy to the community. Mr Andrew CHENG expressed support for Ms LAU's suggestion. Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered that the motion debate should preferably be held at the next session to allow sufficient time for better understanding of the issues involved. In this connection, Mr CHEUNG remarked that it was not opportune for the Administration to release the Report for

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consultation when the current session was drawing to an end. SHA said that the Administration would be willing to consider extending the consultation period if members considered it necessary.

42. The Chairman invited a vote by a show of hands for a decision of the Panel. Five of the seven members casting a vote had voted for a motion debate on the Report to be held in the current session and two voted for a motion debate to be held in the next session. The Chairman undertook to seek the agreement of the House Committee for allocating a slot to hold a motion debate on the Report at the Council meeting on 3 July 2002.

43. Members also agreed to hold a special meeting on Saturday, 22 June 2002 at 9:00 am to collect views on the Report from organisations concerned and sports associations.

V. Promotion of equal opportunities on racial issues

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1548/01-02(01)]

44. Members noted that the Administration had set up a dedicated Race Relations Unit in 2002-03 to enhance race-related services. The Unit's staff, hiring on non-civil service contract terms for two years, would report to a directorate officer of HAB. Ms Cyd HO and Ms Emily LAU cited a newspaper report captioned as "Language skills for Race Relations Unit under fire" and asked whether the requirement that applicants for the vacant posts in the Unit should be able to read and write Chinese would constitute discrimination against ethnic minorities. Ms HO considered that such requirement would prevent or discourage ethnic minorities from applying for the positions.

45. Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1) (DS(HA)1 explained that the Race Relation Unit was created by additional resources to fulfil the undertaking made by HAB in its Policy Checklist Booklet on the Rights of the Individual issued under the 2001 Policy Address. The Unit would mainly be responsible for the logistical or executive aspects of HAB's work in the area, which included maintaining a hot line for enquiries and complaints, providing outreach work to schools, and co-ordinating with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to train volunteers to run induction programmes for non-Chinese New Arrivals, etc. Since addressing discrimination and promoting harmony entailed publicity and other types of public education, it was logical that the primary target should be the 95% majority of the population whose first language was Chinese. The Unit's staff should therefore possess the language skills to reach that target. DS(HA)1 stressed that the requirement was therefore necessary and essential, and should not be regarded as discriminatory. He added that promoting equal opportunities on

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racial issues should involve the joint efforts of Government and various stakeholders including the ethnic minorities themselves. A four-staff unit could hardly be manned by staff with the abilities to understand all the languages of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

46. Ms Cyd HO considered that for the Race Relations Units to carry out its functions effectively, it should at least have some staff who were familiar with the customs and culture of ethnic minorities from Southeast Asian countries. Ms Emily LAU said that it was ironical if the Administration was criticized for discriminating against ethnic minorities in its acts to set up a unit to promote equal opportunities on racial issues.

47. Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (7) responded that the advertisement had stipulated that an ability to speak a minority language would be advantageous, and in fact one of the recruited staff for the Unit was able to speak both Japanese and Indonesian. He pointed out that staff of the Race Relations Unit would maintain a hotline service for the community including the ethnic minorities as well as devise outreach and orientation programmes for non-Chinese new arrivals to facilitate their settlement and integration into the wider community. The Unit would collaborate with NGOs including the International Social Services and Asian Migrants Centre, etc., with relevant field experience for the provision of such services. Ms Emily LAU remarked that the hot line service should aim to follow up complaints on racial issues, rather than to provide counselling service.

48. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the four-staff Race Relations Unit in promoting equal opportunities on racial issues. He asked about the Administration's budget for promoting equal opportunities on racial issues in 2002-03. DS(HA)1 reiterated that the task of promoting equal opportunities on racial issues should involve the participation of all stakeholders. The Unit was intended to assist in the provision of logistical service in that area. He informed members that the Administration had set aside some \$5 million for promoting equal opportunities on racial issues in the 2002-03 financial year. The annual staffing cost of the Units was around \$1.3. The remaining \$3.7 million would be used on relevant education and publicity programmes.

49. Ms Emily LAU and Mr Andrew WONG asked about the Administration's stance on the need to legislate against racial discrimination in the private sector. DS(HA)1 responded that the Government regarded racial discrimination seriously and took pains to ensure that policies concerning racial discrimination were formulated on the basis of good information. He reiterated the Administration's view that education was normally preferable to coercion and had therefore been addressing the issues through public education and administrative measures. Recognising that circumstances might change over time, the Administration

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would keep the issue under review and had therefore conducted a two-phase consultation on the need to legislate against racial discrimination in the private sector. At Ms LAU's request, DS(HA)1 undertook to provide the Panel with an analysis of the results of the consultation in July 2002.

VI. Any other business

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
13 June 2002