

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Tuesday, 9 July 2002 at 8:30 am
in the Chamber 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 James TO Kun-sun
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members absent : Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Public officers attending : Mrs Jennie CHOK
Deputy Secretary for Security

Mr David WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Security

Mr AU Siu-hau
Chief Superintendent
Correctional Services Department

Mr Augustine NG
Assistant Director
Planning Department

Mr TONG Nai-piu
Chief Engineer
Civil Engineering Department

Mr Y M LEE
Chief Engineer
Transport Department

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

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

Action

- I. Prison Development Plan — Feasibility study and preliminary site investigation for land formation and infrastructure works**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)2178/01-02(01) — Paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(2)682/00-01 — An extract from the minutes of the Security Panel meeting on 7 December 2000
- LC Paper No. CB(2)2178/00-01 — An extract from the minutes of the Security Panel meeting on 7 June 2001
- LC Paper No. CB(2)1364/01-02 — An extract from the minutes of the Security Panel meeting on 7 February 2002)

The Chairman said that the purpose of the special meeting was for the Administration to brief members on its proposal to carry out a feasibility study and preliminary site investigation for land formation and infrastructure works for the proposed prison development at Hei Ling Chau. The estimated capital cost for the prison development was about \$16 billion, and the estimated cost for the feasibility study and preliminary site investigation was about \$52.15 million in money-of-the-day prices. The Administration planned to submit the relevant proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee in October 2002.

2. The Chairman further briefed members that the Administration had consulted the Panel on Security on “Prison Development Plan” at its meetings on 7 December 2000, 7 June 2001 and 7 February 2002. At the meeting of 7 February 2002, some members of the Panel on Security considered it expensive to spend \$16 billion to construct a new prison complex and that it was inappropriate to consider the proposal at a time of budget deficit. Some other members were concerned that the co-location of penal institutions under the proposed Prison Development Plan might increase security risk. The Chairman sought clarification from the Administration on whether changes had been made to the proposal to address the concern raised.

3. The Deputy Secretary for Security (DSS) advised that the Administration had originally proposed to construct a much larger prison complex providing 15 000 penal places. To address Members' concern about the security aspect, the Administration had revised its proposal. Under the revised proposal, the new prison complex would provide 7 220 penal places and associated facilities, and would co-locate all the existing penal institution facilities now located in the urban areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon and all existing remand facilities to Hei Ling Chau. After the commissioning of the new prison complex and facilities, the total penal capacity under the Correctional Services Department would reach 13 860. It would not only resolve the current overcrowding problem, but would also meet the forecast growth of the penal population until 2015. DSS then briefed members on the background and justifications for the proposed prison development, major considerations for choosing Hei Ling Chau for the new prison complex, and the scope and nature of the proposed feasibility study and site investigation, as detailed in the paper provided by the Administration.

Site options: Kong Nga Po or Hei Ling Chau

4. Referring to the minutes of the meeting of the Panel on Security on 7 February 2002, the Chairman noted that the Administration had briefed Members on the two site options at Kong Nga Po and Hei Ling Chau for the proposed prison complex. The Administration's view at that time was that the site at Kong Nga Po was preferred from the operational and security points of view. The Chairman asked for the reasons why the Administration had subsequently selected the site at Hei Ling Chau. DDS explained that while the site at Kong Nga Po was preferred from the operational and security points of view, it fell within the Frontier Closed Area the long-term development potential of which was being examined under the Study on Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy. The opportunity cost for the development of the site into a prison complex could be very high.

5. Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip did not understand why the Administration had selected the site at Hei Ling Chau, an isolated island, for the development of the proposed prison complex. He considered the proposed project not cost-effective, as substantial costs would be involved not only for the construction of the proposed

prison complex on an island, but also in the provision of a fixed crossing to connect Hei Ling Chau with Lantau Island. He was concerned about the accessibility to Hei Ling Chau, viability of the proposed fixed crossing, scale of the reclamation works and the capacity for South Lantau Road to cope with the anticipated traffic demand arising from the proposed project.

6. The Assistant Director of Planning Department (AD/PD) pointed out that it was not an easy task to find a suitable site with an area of 76 hectares for the proposed prison complex. The Administration had undertaken a territorial location search for the proposed prison complex on the basis of the Broad Location Search Criteria set out in Enclosure II of the paper. Only the two sites at Kong Nga Po and Hei Ling Chau were identified for further consideration. The site at Kong Nga Po fell within the Frontier Closed Area. During the public consultation on the Study on Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy, the Administration had received views on the need to explore the long-term development potential of the Frontier Closed Area. Pending the outcome of the study, the development of a new prison complex at Kong Nga Po could prejudice the possible long-term development of the Frontier Closed Area. On the other hand, while Hei Ling Chau was an isolated island, it was relatively close to the Lantau Island. Moreover, there were some prevailing correctional facilities at Hei Ling Chau.

7. Mr James TO Kun-sun appreciated the Administration's concern about the long-term development potential of Kong Nga Po. While the site at Hei Ling Chau might be considered as more suitable for the development of the proposed prison complex, the problems of the site, such as higher construction costs and accessibility, needed to be addressed. He urged the Administration to take a proactive approach to identify feasible solutions to address the problems.

8. Mr IP Kwok-him pointed out that during the previous discussions on the proposed prison development at the meetings of the Panel on Security, the focus was on the scale of the proposed prison complex rather than site options. While the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong considered that both of the sites at Hei Ling Chau and Kong Nga Po might be suitable for the purpose, the problems identified needed to be addressed before a decision was made on site selection.

9. To facilitate Members' consideration, Ir Dr Raymond HO Chung-tai requested the Administration to provide a table comparing the two sites at Hei Ling Chau and Kong Nga Po for the proposed prison complex, and provide justifications for proposing the site at Hei Ling Chau, instead of that at Kong Nga Po, for the purpose. DSS agreed to provide the information after the meeting.

Proposed site at Hei Ling Chau

Proposed fixed crossing to connect Hei Ling Chau with Lantau Island

10. Responding to Ir Dr Raymond HO, DSS advised that the proposed fixed crossing to connect Hei Ling Chau with Lantau Island was considered necessary to meet the emergency and operational needs of the proposed prison complex. It would provide a secured access to the proposed prison complex during inclement weather when marine transport was affected and would therefore ensure normal operation, e.g. the transportation of remands pending trial between the proposed prison complex and the courts in urban areas. Given that land transport would also be affected by inclement weather, Ir Dr HO questioned the need for constructing the proposed fixed crossing and requested the Administration to provide the justifications in writing.

11. Referring to the three proposed locations for the fixed crossing to connect Hei Ling Chau with Lantau Island, Mr Albert CHAN considered Option A not viable. He also pointed out that Option A, which might involve the construction of a highway of about four to five kilometres in length in north Silver Mine Bay, would destroy the natural characteristics of the Silver Mine Bay and Mui Wo. As regards Options B and C, both options might involve the construction of a road bridge. The construction costs could be very high, depending on the actual size and length of the bridge. The Chief Engineer of Civil Engineering Department (CE/CED) advised that the three options were only preliminary proposed locations for the fixed crossing. The proposed feasibility study would include, among other things, a preliminary engineering feasibility study on various options of the fixed crossing. Subject to the outcome of the feasibility study, the Administration would decide on the location and form of the fixed crossing, say, in bridges or tunnels. In making the decisions, the Administration would take into account the relevant factors, including environmental and land resumption aspects. Mr IP Kwok-him expressed concern about the environmental impact of the proposed fixed crossing on the surrounding waters. He urged the Administration to look into this aspect.

Implications of the remote location of Hei Ling Chau on visitors, traffic and cost

12. Mr Albert CHAN considered Hei Ling Chau too remote from the urban areas. It would take about one hour to go from Tsuen Wan or Kwai Chung areas to Hei Ling Chau by car and would take much longer time by bus. In view of the substantial time and long distance involved, it was not cost-effective to transport inmates to and from Hei Ling Chau for court attendance in urban areas and might create security problems. It would also be very inconvenient for relatives of inmates to travel to the new prison complex. Mr IP Kwok-him shared Mr CHAN's view. He pointed out that substantial time would be required to travel from the Hong Kong Island to Hei Ling Chau. He considered that both marine and land transport should be provided for prison visitors.

13. The Chief Engineer of Transport Department (CE/TD) advised that at present, ferry services were provided as the major means of public transport from the Hong Kong Island to Mui Wo. It might be more cost-effective for visitors in the North West New Territories to travel to Tung Chung for bus transfer to Hei Ling Chau than route through the Hong Kong Island. Upon the opening of the proposed fixed

crossing, other means of public transport, such as mini buses or buses would be provided to meet the increase in demand. In this connection, CE/TD pointed out that one of the areas to be covered in the proposed feasibility study was a detailed traffic impact assessment, which would include a study of possible new travel means for visitors.

14. The Chairman was concerned that the existing road network in Tung Chung and Mui Wo was insufficient to meet the additional traffic demand arising from the prison development at Hei Ling Chau. DSS assured members that a traffic impact assessment would be covered by the proposed feasibility study.

15. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that the planning and design of the South Lantau Road in the 1960s mainly catered for the commissioning of the Shek Pik Reservoir. He was concerned that the proposed prison development would generate heavy traffic flows for the South Lantau Road and Tung Chung Road. Mr IP Kwok-him held the view that the Administration should thoroughly consider the transport facilities required for the proposed prison complex.

16. After deliberations, members requested the Administration to consider the following points and provide the required information:

- (a) The Administration was requested to provide information /data on the traffic volume for South Lantau Road and assess whether the existing road capacity would be able to cope with the increase in traffic demand after the proposed new prison complex at Hei Ling Chau came into operation. If it would not be able to cope with the increase in traffic demand, the Administration should set out its proposals to address the concern on traffic demand;
- (b) The Administration was requested to consider the implications of the proposed project on visitors, e.g. the time and cost for visitors such as relatives of prisoners to travel to the proposed new prison; and
- (c) The Administration was requested to provide information on the cost implication for transporting remands pending trial from the proposed prison complex at Hei Ling Chau to courts in urban areas. The Administration should also consider whether it was cost-effective to provide remand facilities at the proposed new prison complex.

Proposed reclamation works

17. Responding to Mr IP Kwok-him, DSS advised that an area of about 76 to 80 hectares between Hei Ling Chau and Sunshine Island would be reclaimed for the proposed prison development. CE/CED added that public fill would be used in the reclamation works and it would help provide additional public filling facilities. The

sea-bed at the proposed site was about six to eight metres deep and appeared to be suitable for the proposed reclamation works.

18. Responding to Mr TAM Yiu-chung, DSS advised that the large-scale reclamation was required to make available sufficient land for the proposed new prison complex and associated facilities. CE/CED added that the alternative to reclamation for site formation at the hilly Hei Ling Chau was through levelling of hills, which would not be cost-effective and would generate huge amount of surplus fill.

19. Mr Albert CHAN indicated his objection to the proposed reclamation works. Mr IP Kwok-him, Mr TAM Yiu-chung and Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that the scale of reclamation should be reduced. In this connection, Ir Dr HO enquired whether Sunshine Island could provide part of the land for the proposed prison development, and whether there was any building or monument on the Island that needed to be preserved. CE/CED advised that Sunshine Island, same as Hei Ling Chau, was hilly. To preserve the natural scenery and geographical layout of the Island, the Administration had no plan to carry out site formation works on Sunshine Island through excavation or levelling of hills. According to the Antiquities and Monuments Office, there was no record of buildings/monuments for heritage preservation on Sunshine Island. Nevertheless, a cultural heritage impact assessment would be covered by the proposed feasibility study.

20. Mr IP Kwok-him, Mr TAM Yiu-chung and Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed concern about the impact of the large-scale reclamation works on the environment and marine lives in the surrounding waters. They requested the Administration to provide the relevant bureaux/departments' preliminary assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed project. Mr TAM also requested the Administration to consult the fishermen/fishermen associations affected by the project.

Project cost

21. Noting that the capital cost and the cost of the site investigation works for the proposed prison development were estimated to be about \$16 billion and \$23 million respectively, Ir Dr Raymond HO enquired whether the substantial costs were caused by the remoteness of the site at Hei Ling Chau. CE/CED advised that additional costs were involved to cater for the transportation of the construction materials to Hei Ling Chau. Moreover, it was essential to conduct the preliminary site investigation works to identify problems at an early stage. As investigation below sea level would be required, considerable cost would be involved. Nevertheless, the cost of conducting the preliminary site investigation works for the proposed project was not high compared with other similar projects undertaken in the past.

22. Mr Albert CHAN and Mr TAM Yiu-chung also expressed concern about the substantial costs of the proposed project. DDS advised that the estimated capital cost

of \$16 billion included the cost for the provision of a fixed crossing connecting Hei Ling Chau with Lantau Island. She pointed out that implementation of the proposal would make available valuable sites in urban areas for other development, such as provision of schools, community facilities and/or commercial facilities, which would benefit the community.

23. Responding to Mr IP Kwok-him, DSS advised that the capital cost for prison development at Hei Ling Chau and Kong Nga Po were estimated to be \$16 billion and \$15.7 billion respectively. CE/CED advised that the cost for site formation through excavation or levelling of hills at Kong Nga Po would be more expensive than through reclamation at Hei Ling Chau. However, the provision of a fixed crossing for the site at Hei Ling Chau would be more costly than the provision of infrastructure for the site at Kong Nga Po, such as road-widening works for the Man Kam To Road.

Conclusion

24. The Chairman concluded that on the basis of the information presently provided by the Administration for discussion at the meeting, the Panel was unable to give its support to the proposed prison development at Hei Ling Chau. In view of the remoteness of Hei Ling Chau, the large-scale of reclamation works proposed for the project and the cost implications, the Chairman suggested the Administration to explore alternative site(s) in urban areas, for the proposed prison complex. In response, DSS pointed out that the proposed feasibility study would cover a number of detailed assessments including environmental impact assessment and traffic impact assessment. More information would be available after the completion of the study. Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that for such a large-scale project involving \$25 million and \$23 million for the proposed feasibility study and preliminary site investigation respectively, initial assessments on various site options should be conducted by the Administration. Other members shared his view and requested the Administration to provide more information to address the concerns raised by members at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2599/01-02 on 26 September 2002.)

II. Any other business

25. The Chairman reminded members that an informal meeting had been scheduled for 11 July 2002 from 9:00 am to 9:30 am for the Clerk to brief and consult members on the arrangements for the overseas duty visit of the Panel.

26. As it was approaching the end of the 2001-2002 session, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank members and the Legislative Council Secretariat for their support during the session.

27. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9:40 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

25 November 2002