

**Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Meeting on 14 April 2003**

Scope of issues to be considered under the agenda item on "Coverage of mobile telephone service and television broadcasting service"

Background

At the meeting between LegCo Members and members of the Yuen Long District Council held on 31 October 2002, the issue of unsatisfactory reception of mobile telephone service and poor television reception in certain areas of Yuen Long was discussed. The meeting decided that the issue should be referred to the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting for follow-up. The relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting is in Appendix I.

Issues of concern to be addressed

2. The Panel Chairman has advised that the Panel should examine the subject from a "territory-wide" and policy perspective and has requested the Administration to provide information, inter alia, on the following:

- (a) The extent of the problems of unsatisfactory mobile service coverage and poor TV broadcast reception (mainly the two free TV stations and Cable TV) and whether the problems are more acute in certain districts of Hong Kong;
- (b) The existing legal/regulatory framework for the provision of mobile telephone service and TV service to different parts of the territory; whether the Hong Kong Cable Television and the Galaxy Satellite Broadcasting Limited have any universal service obligation under their respective licence as some Panel members have pointed out that cable TV service is currently not available in areas like Tai O and Mui Wo;
- (c) Information on the number of complaints received by the Administration about poor mobile service coverage and TV coverage; how the complaints are being dealt with; and the operators' comments on the complaints lodged against them; and

- (d) The actions taken/to be taken (both legislative and administrative) to address the problems of unsatisfactory mobile service and TV coverage.

3. The Consumer Council has also been invited to provide information in relation to item (c) above.

4. At the Panel meeting held on 4 March 2003, a member has also requested the Administration to provide information on a related issue of how the Administration will deal with cases in which the mobile service operators concerned have breached buildings-related legislation in erecting their mobile service base stations at buildings.

Latest position

5. The Administration and the Consumer Council have been requested to provide the necessary information to facilitate members' consideration at the forthcoming Panel meeting.

6. Members are invited to note the scope of issues included under the agenda item in paragraphs 2 to 4.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 April 2003

Extract
立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1389/02-03

(These minutes have been
cleared with the Convenor)

Ref : CB2/DC/YL/02

**Minutes of LegCo Members' Meeting with
Yuen Long District Council Members**

**on Thursday, 31 October 2002 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members Present : Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP (Convenor)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
(also the Chairman of Yuen Long District Council)
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

By Invitation : Members of Yuen Long District Council

Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP (Chairman)
(also a Legislative Council Member)
Mr LEUNG Che-cheung (Vice-chairman)
Mr CHAM Ka-hung
Mr CHAN Siu-kay
Ms FUNG Choi-yuk, MH
Mr KWOK Keung
Mr LAM Kwok-cheong, JP
Mr LEE Keng-yip
Mr LEUNG Fuk-yuen
Mr LO Yuk-fun
Mr MAK Ip-sing
Mr MAN Fu-wan, BBS
Mr SUNG Wai-ching
Mr TANG Wai-ming
Mr WONG Cheung-kwong

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Mr WONG Chung-sing, MH
Mr WONG Kin-wing
Miss YAU Tai-tai, MH
Mr YEUNG Yuk-chiu, MH, JP

**Accompanied by
staff of Yuen Long District Council**

Ms Lorinda YIU
Senior Executive Officer

Ms Sandy LING
Executive Officer I

Staff in Attendance : Ms Doris CHAN
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 4

Ms Dora WAI
Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 4

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II. Improvement to mobile telephone and television broadcasting coverage in Yuen Long

9. Some YLDC members pointed out that YLDC had held a number of discussions with the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) concerning the problem of unsatisfactory reception of mobile telephones and poor television reception in certain areas of Yuen Long. Despite the assistance rendered by the OFTA, there had not been much improvement in the situation.

Mobile telephone coverage

10. Mr LEUNG Fuk-yuen pointed out that some mobile telephone network providers operated solely from a commercial angle and were reluctant to further invest to improve their network coverage in remote areas. As a result, mobile telephone network coverage in remote locations, such as rural areas and some country parks, was far less comprehensive than that in urban areas. He considered that it was unfair to the people living in or visiting these places and held the view that the Government should have a responsibility to ensure that consumers' right to receive good telecommunications services within the territory was duly protected. He hoped that LegCo Members would urge the Government to look into the matter and explore ways to improve the situation.

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11. Mr WONG Cheung-kwong expressed dissatisfaction about the poor quality of some new fixed telephone line services available at the market. To better protect the interests of consumers, he opined that the Government should step up monitoring to ensure the provision of a reasonable standard of service by fixed telecommunications network service operators.

12. Mr CHAN Siu-kay considered that mobile telephone network providers should have a responsibility to improve their network coverage from time to time in order to meet the needs of their customers in an ever-changing market. These providers should also ensure the service standards of their staff as there had been complaints that sales representatives of mobile telephone network providers had caused nuisance to residents during promotions of their products/services. He considered that the Government should exercise more control in these areas.

13. Ms FUNG Choi-yuk pointed out that certain locations in the New Territories had no local mobile telephone network coverage. Instead, network coverage of some Mainland mobile telephone network providers might be accessed in these locations. Although the people concerned could make mobile phone calls through the Mainland's networks, if roaming service was available, the callers would have to pay a higher charge since the calls made would be counted as long-distance calls. She considered it unreasonable and ironic to have such a situation in an international city like Hong Kong. She hoped that LegCo Members would urge the Government to improve the situation.

Television broadcasting coverage

14. Mr LEUNG Fuk-yuen, Mr WONG Cheung-kwong, Mr MAK Yip-sing and Mr LO Yuk-fun pointed out that television reception in certain areas of Yuen Long was poor due to shadows from high-rise developments. This problem was commonly found in village houses and low-rise buildings. They understood that the construction of transposers on the rooftop of some high-rise buildings in Yuen Long could help improve the television broadcasting coverage in the district. However, a proposal to construct a transposer at Wing Wah Building was abandoned due to objection from the owners of the building. In view of this, these YLDC members suggested that legislation should be enacted to require contractors of new developments to provide space on the rooftop for the installation of transposers, where necessary. This would help ensure that television reception would not be further affected by new high-rise developments. They hoped that LegCo Members would urge the Administration to address the issue and consider their suggestion.

15. Mr WONG Kin-wing said that the television broadcasting coverage in the Ng Wo area was particularly poor. To improve the situation, he suggested that prior arrangements should be made to enable the installation of transposers on the rooftop of future building developments above the stations along the West Rail line. He hoped that LegCo Members would render assistance in this regard.

16. Mr WONG Cheung-kwong gathered that Cable TV had on some occasions temporarily suspended its cable television service in some residential estates for the

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purpose of detecting unauthorised installation of cable television decoders by individual residents. Given that the suspension of cable television service would affect a great number of households subscribing for such service, he expressed doubt as to whether Cable TV had the authority to do so.

17. Mr MAK Yip-sing pointed out that the reception of the Asia Television channel in Tin Shui Wai was poor due to signal interference from some Shenzhen television channels. Given that there were a number of public housing estates in Tin Shui Wai, he hoped that the Government would carry out improvement works to enhance the television broadcasting coverage there. In addition, he suggested that the Government should urge the two local television broadcasting companies to build one more transmitting tower to improve the overall television reception in the territory.

18. Mr TANG Wai-ming considered that the long-term solution to the problem of poor television broadcasting coverage was the implementation of an alternative means of broadcasting, such as digital television broadcasting, on a territory-wide basis. He hoped that LegCo Members would urge the Administration to speed up the review of the existing mode of broadcasting with a view to identifying a new television broadcasting system which could enhance the quality and coverage as a whole.

19. Mr CHAN Kwok-keung agreed to YLDC members' suggestions referred to in paragraphs 14 and 15 above. He pointed out that if digital television broadcasting system was adopted in Hong Kong, all existing televisions would have to be discarded and replaced by new ones. He also pointed out that views had been expressed by stakeholders that the new television broadcasting system in Hong Kong should preferably be the same as that of the Mainland. However, the Mainland had not yet finalised a standardised television broadcasting system for the whole country. He considered that this might be the reason why the Government did not pursue the matter at this stage.

20. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that the problem of poor television broadcasting coverage also occurred in Tsuen Wan and outlying islands. In his view, the Government should consider requiring developers to ensure that their new developments would not affect the television broadcasting and mobile telephone coverage in the nearby areas. However, if this was inevitable, remedial measures to improve the coverage in the affected areas should be taken by the developers concerned. He believed that this could be achieved by amending the Town Planning Board's procedures for approving applications concerning land use.

21. Mr Albert CHAN further pointed out that although the OFTA was unable to compulsorily require mobile telephone network providers to provide universal coverage, it should exert more pressure on them to upgrade their network from time to time in order to meet the changing needs of the community. In respect of television broadcasting coverage, he considered that the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau should bear the responsibility to ensure that the four local television channels were available to everyone in any district within Hong Kong.

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Clerk to
follow up

22. Mr CHAN Kwok-keung and Mr Albert CHAN suggested that the subject should be referred to the LegCo Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting for follow-up.

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