

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(1) 224/04-05  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

**Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Minutes of meeting held on  
Monday, 25 October 2004, at 2:30 pm  
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon CHOY So-yuk (Chairman)  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, S.B.St.J., JP  
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP  
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP  
Hon LEE Wing-tat  
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

**Non-Panel Members:  
attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH  
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC  
Hon KWONG Chi-kin

**Member absent** : Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP

**Public officers  
attending** : **For item IV**  
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Dr Sarah LIAO  
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Mr K K KWOK  
Permanent Secretary (Environment)

Mr Roy TANG  
Deputy Secretary (Environment) 2

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Rob LAW  
Director of Environmental Protection

**For item V**

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Dr Sarah LIAO  
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Mr K K KWOK  
Permanent Secretary (Environment)

Mrs Teresa WONG  
Ag Deputy Secretary (Environment) 1

Ms Kitty YU  
Assistant Secretary (Environment) 2A

Environmental Protection Department

Dr Ellen CHAN  
Assistant Director (Waste Facilities)

**For item VI**

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Dr Sarah LIAO  
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Mr K K KWOK  
Permanent Secretary (Environment)

Mr Roy TANG  
Deputy Secretary (Environment) 2

Mr C W TSE  
Principal Assistant Secretary (Environment) 3

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Rob LAW  
Director of Environmental Protection

**Clerk in attendance :** Miss Becky YU  
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

**Staff in attendance :** Mrs Mary TANG  
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Miss Mandy POON  
Legislative Assistant (1)4

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Action

- I. Confirmation of minutes**  
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 73/04-05 — Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2004)

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2004 were confirmed.

**II. Information paper issued since last meeting**

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

- III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**  
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 79/04-05(01) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

3. The Chairman referred members to the list of outstanding items for discussion which was tabled at the meeting. She said that the list was worked out in consultation with the Administration after taking into account items outstanding from the 2003-04 session and the Administration's schedule for submission of financial and legislative proposals.

Action

4. In response to Mr Albert CHAN's question, the Chairman said that the subject of aircraft noise, which fell under the purview of the Economic Development and Labour Bureau (EDLB), would be followed by the Panel on Economic Services (ES Panel). Members of the Panel of Environmental Affairs (EA Panel) would be invited to attend the meeting of the ES Panel when the subject was discussed. Mr CHAN remarked that it was wrong to place the subject of aircraft noise, which was an environmental issue, under the policy purview of EDLB. He said that there might be a need to discuss the demarcation of work among policy bureaux.

5. The Chairman reminded members that the next regular meeting would be held on Thursday, 18 November 2004, from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm to discuss the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme Stage 2.

6. At the request of the Administration, members also agreed to hold a special meeting on Monday, 22 November 2004, at 2:30 pm to discuss the following items –

- (a) Composite Paper on Three Sewerage Projects
  - Tai Po sewage treatment works, stage 5 phase 1
  - Outlying Islands sewerage stage 1 phase 2 - Peng Chau sewage treatment works upgrade
  - Outlying Islands sewerage stage 1 phase 1 part 1- Ngong Ping village sewerage works
- (b) Review of the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance;
- (c) Nature Conservation Policy Review.

*(Post-meeting note: The item on “Outlying Islands sewerage stage 1 phase 1 part 1- Ngong Ping village sewerage works” under (a) was removed from the agenda at the request of the Administration. The titles of (a) and (c) were also changed as advised by the Administration.)*

7. Ms Miriam LAU noted that the current meeting was extended for 30 minutes to end at 5:00 pm to allow sufficient time to discuss the additional item on “Strategies for air pollution control”. She said that while the Chairman had the discretion to extend a meeting, such a decision might cause inconvenience to those members who had prior commitments and hence could not be able to stay for the extended session. It would therefore be more desirable to adhere to the original time slot as far as practicable and to schedule a special meeting to discuss a particular item if and when necessary. Her views were shared by Mr Albert CHAN. The Chairman said that the extension of the meeting was made at the request of the Deputy Chairman and members were notified of the arrangement on 20 October 2004.

Action

**IV Merger of the Environment Branch of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau with the Environmental Protection Department**

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 3/04-05(01) — Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1) 79/04-05(02) — Paper provided by the Administration)

8. The Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment) (PSETW(E)) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to merge the Environment Branch of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The Chairman then drew members' attention to a submission, which was tabled at the meeting and referred to the Panel by the Administration, from the Environmental Protection Officer Branch of the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association (the Association) expressing support for the proposed merger. She also reminded members to focus their discussion on the policy aspect of the merger rather than the establishment changes, which should be discussed by the Establishment Subcommittee.

*(Post-meeting note: The letter from the Association was subsequently circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 114/04-05(01).)*

9. Mr Albert CHAN expressed general support for merging of departments and bureaux and hoped that this could be implemented as soon as possible. He suggested that ETWB should pursue the merging of the Transport Department with its bureau, though it would be a much more complicated exercise, would be in the public interest as it would save a lot of resources.

Proposed organizational structure of the new EPD

10. Ms Audrey EU enquired whether there was sufficient manpower to cope with workload of EPD, particularly in respect of monitoring and reviewing of the implementation of policies. PSETW(E) answered in the affirmative. He advised that under the new structure, the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) would be assisted by three Deputy Directors of Environmental Protection (DDEPs). While one of the DDEPs would be responsible for operations, the other two would assist DEP in policy development and formulation.

11. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed concern that the proposed merger would result in the replacement of professional staff by Administrative Officers (AOs), thereby affecting the professionalism of the new EPD. He then enquired about the number of professional staff which would be retained. Expressing similar concern, Dr KWOK Ka-ki also cautioned that the replacement of professional staff by AOs might affect the implementation of environmental policies, including management of clinical waste, in the long run. PSETW(E) explained that the proposed merger was meant to strengthen the processes of policy making and implementation by integrating

Action

the work of professional staff and AOs so that they could be able to work better as a team. This would not in any way affect the professionalism of the department. While one D5 post and two D1 posts of professional grade and one D2 post of AO Staff Grade C would no longer be required consequent upon the proposed rationalization of the directorate structure, the rest of professional staff currently in EPD would be retained in the new EPD. In addition, senior professional staff with relevant experience and proven abilities would be given the opportunity to fill directorate posts currently filled by AOs when suitable vacancies arose. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment)2 (DSETW(E)2) added that, other than the four posts mentioned by PSETW(E), the rest of the 1 170 professional staff under the existing establishment of EPD and their posts would be retained after the proposed merger. To enable a smooth transition and to engage staff in the policy formulation, about 80 existing staff of EPD would be placed under the two DSETW(E) who would be re-designated as DDEPs responsible for policy formulation. With the proposed merger, the number of staff to be placed under the two DDEPs would be 220.

12. The Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works (SETW) supplemented that there was no plan to replace the professional staff with AOs under the proposed merger. The new EPD would be headed by a D6 post which under the system, would be of open directorate and could be filled by AOs or professional staff, since both managerial and professional skills were essential in steering environmental policies which were both vast and varied, and at times political. She assured members that sufficient manpower and resources would be deployed to the Waste Policy Division of the new EPD so as not to delay the provision of policy framework for improved management of special wastes, including clinical waste.

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted with concern that there appeared to be a very uneven distribution of duties among the three DDEPs. While DDEP(1) took charge of a large number of operational responsibilities which ranged from environmental assessment to prosecution, DDEP(2) and DDEP(3) were each responsible for the policy formulation of two portfolios only. The number of staff reporting to DDEP(1) was also much more than that of the other two. PSETW(E) explained that the duties of DDEP(1) reflected the responsibilities of the existing DDEP who, being in charge of operations and implementation of policies, would require more staffing support. Meanwhile, the duties of policy formulation and legislative review to be undertaken by DDEP(2) and DDEP(3) did not require as much support but this did not mean that their responsibilities were less.

14. Ms Emily LAU asked why the Prosecution Unit (PU) was not shown in the existing organizational chart of EPD. The Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) explained that a few years ago, the Local Control Offices under the Local Control Division were responsible for investigation and prosecution. As the actual decision on whether to prosecute was made by the individual offices carrying out the investigations, the Department of Justice (D of J) considered such an arrangement inappropriate. As a result, an independent PU, headed by an Assistant Director who

## Action

was separate from the staff gathering evidence, was set up. With the proposed merger, PU would be directly overseen by a Deputy Director and would be further separated from the evidence collection groups. This degree of separation was considered more acceptable by D of J as this would ensure that those who made decisions on prosecution were entirely separated from those who involved in evidence collection.

15. Noting that the Environmental Assessment Division (EAD) of the new EPD would discharge some specialist functions in the noise planning area such as modelling of road and air traffic noise, Mr Albert CHAN questioned why EPD was responsible for functions relating to air traffic noise but did not have the authority to formulate and implement such policies, which currently fell under the purview of the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) and EDLB, both of which were more concerned about the economic benefits of the aviation industry rather than noise control. He said that as EPD had the authority to control noise generated from road and marine traffic, there was no reason why it could not have control over noise generated from air traffic. SETW explained that there were different types of air traffic noise. While noise disturbance from helicopters was under the purview of EPD, the Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) of aircraft was within the ambit of CAD. DSETW(E)2 supplemented that EAD of the new EPD would take charge of noise assessments as well as strategic and local development planning which covered the control of road traffic noise and planning of noise barriers etc. DEP added that while the statutory control of aircraft noise rested with CAD, EPD was asked to comment on town planning proposals and to provide input on new planning developments. These might include, among others, providing comments on NEF contours introduced by CAD, advising on road traffic modelling and proposed helipad operation near residential developments.

16. Mr Albert CHAN enquired about the number of junior posts to be deleted as a result of the proposed merger. He was concerned that the number of junior posts to be deleted would far outweigh that of senior posts. DSETW(E)2 explained that the some 50 non-directorate posts would be deleted as a result of the Government's general efficiency drive rather than the proposed merger by the end of March 2007. The deletion would be achieved through natural wastage, the Second Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) and internal redeployment. No forced redundancy would be involved.

## Staffing issues

17. While supporting the proposed merger, Ir Dr Raymond HO hoped that the merger could be implemented in a manner which would not affect staff morale. Consideration should be given to allowing those whose ranks were not included in VRS to leave if they so wished. The service of graduate trainees should also be retained so that they could acquire corporate membership of relevant professional bodies. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong however took a different view. He said that while Members of the Democratic Party would support the proposed merger, it might

Action

not be appropriate for those whose ranks were not included in VRS to apply for retirement packages. He pointed out that according to the Director of Audit, allowing retirement packages for those not eligible for VRS would incur additional public expenditure, as provisions had to be made for their posts to be filled. He stressed the need to adhere to the established retirement policies which should not be sacrificed for the sake of securing support for the proposed merger. PSETW(E) took note of members' views.

18. Mr LAU Kong-wah noted that staff concerned were generally receptive to the proposed merger, and that the Administration would continue to maintain a dialogue with them to address their concerns. He then enquired about the nature of staff concerns and whether these had anything to do with their promotion prospect. DSETW(E)2 said that staff concerned had been kept abreast of the developments through the issue of seven open letters by DEP. Meanwhile, a total of 13 meetings were held with different levels of staff. The letter from the Association tabled at the meeting had clearly indicated support for the proposed merger. It was stated in the letter that the Association welcomed the upgrading of the DEP post to D6 post with the combined role as PSETW(E) and was confident that an AO grade staff would be able to lead the department to face the new environmental changes ahead. It also accepted that two of DDEP posts of the new EPD would be taken up by AO grade staff. Its greatest concern was that three senior professional posts would be lost as a result of the proposed merger. Staff concerned had been advised that the senior directorate posts would be filled in future by an open directorate system i.e. these posts would be equally made available for the senior professional staff of EPD who had proven abilities and competence.

19. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that the chances of promotion of professional staff of EPD would likely be diminished as a result of the merger because the senior directorate posts, formerly available to them through direct promotion, had to be shared out by and competed with AO grade staff under the open directorate system. He enquired if the Administration was prepared to provide an undertaking to the effect that the promotion prospect of professional staff would not be adversely affected by the merger. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong however pointed out it had always been the practice for those who were competent to get the job. As such, there should not be any undertaking that directorate posts should be awarded to professional staff. The open directorate system should enable the most competent officers to fill the posts, be they AOs or professional staff. DSETW(E)2 explained that with the upgrading of the DEP post from D5 to D6 and the re-designation of the two existing DSETW(E) (D3) posts staffed by AOs as DDEPs, making a total of three DDEPs in the new EPD (as opposed to the existing arrangement of only one DDEP), the chances of promotion for eligible professional staff would actually be improved under the open directorate system.

20. While expressing support for the proposed merger, Ms Emily LAU found the savings arising from the deletion of four directorate posts and 50 non-directorate posts not enough and hoped that more savings could be achieved, possibly through another

Action

merger. Referring to paragraph 20 of the Administration's paper on "Strategies on air pollution control" under agenda item VI, she enquired how manpower resources released from the proposed merger could be able to assist in widening the scope of exchanges with Guangdong Province on air pollution measures and building up partnerships with Hong Kong companies operating in the Mainland in effecting emission control measures. In response, SETW acknowledged the need to achieve savings but emphasized that a lot needed to be done in protecting the environment, particularly in controlling the deteriorating regional air quality which required the concerted effort of the Guangdong authorities in the formulation of policies and control framework which had yet to be worked out.

21. As it was clearly set out in the aforementioned paper that manpower resources saved by the merger would be redeployed to deal with cross-border issues, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the Administration should strive to provide the necessary manpower once the proposed merger had been implemented. PSETW(E) confirmed that one of the three DDEPs under the new organizational structure would take up the responsibility of co-ordinating cross-border issues.

22. Before concluding, the Chairman asked members if they would support the proposal in principle and whether they would agree to allow the Administration to submit the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee. Members agreed.

**V. PWP Item 5166DR – Restoration of Tseung Kwan O Landfills – post-completion environmental monitoring work**  
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 79/04-05(03) — Paper provided by the Administration)

23. The Acting Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment)1 (Ag DSETW(E)1) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to upgrade PWP Item 5166DR "Restoration of Tseung Kwan O Landfills (TKOL) – post-completion environmental monitoring work" to Category A for continuing the post-completion environmental monitoring work at TKOL for a further period of seven years (from February 2006 to January 2013) at an estimated cost of \$98.7 million in money-of-the-day prices. Subject to members' view, the proposal would be submitted to Public Works Subcommittee for consideration.

Management of landfills

24. Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed concern about the harmful effects associated with the considerable amount of landfill gas and leachate produced in TKOL. He also questioned why, despite continuing maintenance and control, the problem of surface and groundwater infiltration was still so serious. He then sought explanation on whether the intensity of infiltration had been taken into consideration in designing the landfills, and whether there were any means of control. The Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Facilities) (ADEP(WF)) advised that the restoration

Action

facilities for TKOL were completed in 1999 and the post-completion environmental monitoring work had commenced since. While the Biological Oxygen Demand of the leachate was able to meet the prescribed standard, the Chemical Oxygen Demand and the total nitrogen concentration had exceeded the acceptable limits. By way of illustration, the total nitrogen concentration of the leachate averaged at 1 000 milligrams per litre was way above the acceptable discharge standard of 200 milligrams per litre. Therefore, the operation and maintenance of the leachate management system had to be continued in order to meet the discharge standards under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (Cap. 358). As regards leachate infiltration, ADEP(WF) advised that the existing control and management system had served to reduce the polluting effects. Besides, the treated leachate from the leachate management system would not be discharged into the surrounding waters direct but would be conveyed to the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works for further treatment before disposal. Water quality tests were also performed at different locations to ensure that the leachate generated would not affect the surface and groundwater as well as marine water quality.

25. Ms Miriam LAU said that she had no choice but to support the funding proposal as otherwise the generation of landfill gas and leachate could not be kept under control. Noting that TKOL was among the 13 closed landfills, she enquired if the remaining landfills would require the same degree of monitoring and maintenance and if so, whether funding was required on an ongoing process, even for those landfills which were closed since 1975. Given that the maintenance of landfills was a problem worldwide, she enquired if the measures being adopted were considered most effective and whether reference had been made to overseas experience. SETW said that the three operating landfills, namely the North East New Territories (NENT) Landfill, the South East New Territories Landfill and the West New Territories Landfill, had adopted the most advanced technology. Through a system of boreholes and extraction wells, the landfill gas was collected and put to use while the leachate was conveyed to treatment plants to prevent groundwater infiltration. However, the problem of landfill gas and leachate infiltration was more difficult to manage in the older landfills, and every effort had been made to keep them under control. Meanwhile, landfills which were completely restored were put to beneficial uses such as recreational parks and golf driving range.

26. Mr Patrick LAU enquired if the landfill gas had been put to beneficial use and if so, whether this could be used to generate revenue. Ag DSETW(E)1 answered in the affirmative. Landfill gas produced at each landfill would be used to generate energy for its own operations. In addition landfill gas produced by the Shuen Wan (SW) Landfill and NENT Landfill was/would be conveyed to the gas station of the Towngas at Tai Po for use as fuel. ADEP(WF) added that 47% of the landfill gas generated from TKOL I, II and III had been put to beneficial use, such as providing energy for the leachate management systems and lighting for the landfills. However, as the amount of landfill gas produced by the closed landfills was decreasing, it might not be worthwhile to invest in the gas production and connection system. For the three operating landfills which generated large amounts of landfill gas, the

Action

Administration was actively liaising with the power companies on how best the gas could be utilized. Plans were already in place for the use of landfill gas produced by the NENT Landfill. SETW supplemented that as landfill gas had to undergo a process of filtration before this could be put to use, it might not be cost effective to invest in the process if only limited amount of landfill gas was produced, particularly for those older landfills.

Use of restored landfill sites

27. Mr Patrick LAU enquired whether there were plans on utilization of restored landfill sites. Ag DSETW(E)1 advised that usage of the restored landfill sites would depend on their condition, location and suitability for public use. Some of the restored landfill sites were converted into recreational facilities, such as the use of the SW Landfill as a golf-driving range, Sai Tso Wan (STW) Landfill as a multi-purpose grass pitch for football and baseball, and part of TKOL as playground for flying model airplanes. Other plans to develop restored landfills into recreational parks for public use were under consideration. As to when restored landfills could be put to normal use, ADEP(WF) said that this would depend on the size of the landfills and the amount and nature of waste which had been disposed of at these landfills. There was no hard and fast rule on when a restored landfill site could be put to normal use as conditions differed for each landfill and separate aftercare plans had to be drawn up.

28. Mr LEE Wing-tat expressed concern about the serious shortfall of recreational grounds in Hong Kong, particularly during weekends and public holidays. He was of the view that instead of leaving the closed landfill sites idle, they should be put to more beneficial use. He therefore urged ETWB to work out, in conjunction with other relevant Bureaux, plans to develop the restored landfill sites into recreational grounds for public use. SETW said that there were ongoing plans to put the restored landfill sites to beneficial use. Apart from the STW Landfill and SW Landfill, there were also plans to develop other restored landfills into recreational grounds. The Administration was also looking into the feasibility of enlisting private sector participation in developing landfill sites. Consideration would also be given to using the funds provided by the Hong Kong Jockey Club to develop landfills for recreational use. Meanwhile, ETWB was working with the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) on the management of recreational grounds which were formerly landfill sites.

29. To facilitate better understanding, Mr LEE Wing-tat requested for an information paper on the plans to utilize the restored landfill sites. Given the varying conditions of landfills, SETW said that there were difficulties in providing such a plan as it was not possible to accurately forecast the time when landfill gas would no longer be emitted from a restored landfill, rendering it safe for development. Ag DSETW(E)1 added that a working group had been set up under the HAB to advise on the usage of restored landfill sites. While appreciating the difficulties, Mr LEE opined that there should be some rough estimate on when a landfill could be put to safe use. Such information should also be included in the tender for development of landfills. Expressing similar concern, Ms Emily LAU requested that an information

Action

paper be provided on the progress of restoration of landfills and a plan on the usage of restored landfill sites. The Chairman also considered it necessary for the Administration to provide monitoring data on landfills to District Councils so that the community would be able to know if their neighbouring landfills were free from safety hazard. Such data should be set out in laymen terms to facilitate public understanding. SETW took note of members' view. She said that consideration would be given to uploading such data onto the Government website.

30. Dr KWOK Ka-ki enquired about the time and money required for restoring landfills and whether an average unit cost could be worked out taking into account the capital and recurrent costs incurred. He also emphasized the need for prevention and reduction of construction and demolition materials. Efforts should be made to deter indiscriminate demolition, particularly the alleged demolition of the Hung Hom Peninsula, which would result in depletion of the much needed landfill space. SETW agreed that the management and maintenance of landfills had been a heavy financial burden as considerable amount of resources had to be invested in the restoration and aftercare works which needed to be carried out for an extended period of time. Besides, the restored landfill sites could only be put to normal use after a very long time. As regards the average cost for management and maintenance of a landfill, SETW said that it would be difficult to provide such an estimate as the cost differed for individual landfills. ADEP(WF) supplemented that since the size, age and condition of landfills differed, a cost assessment might not provide a meaningful comparison. Nevertheless, the Administration agreed to provide more information on landfill costs. On indiscriminate demolition, the Chairman advised that the subject fell outside the scope of the current discussion. However, this could be discussed a forthcoming meeting on waste management.

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**VI. Strategies for Air Pollution Control**

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 79/04-05(04) — Paper provided by the Administration)

31. At the invitation of the Chairman, SETW highlighted the salient points in the Administration's information paper on strategies for air pollution control. The Chairman drew members' attention to the submission from Greenpeace and the articles published in the South China Morning Post on air quality control which were tabled at the meeting.

*(Post-meeting note: The submission from Greenpeace and articles published in the South China Morning Post on air quality control were circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 114/04-05.)*

Emission reduction targets

32. As the air quality of Hong Kong was increasingly affected by regional air pollution as economic and industrial development in the Pearl River Delta (PRD)

Action

Region continued to grow, Mr Martin LEE said that the problem could not be resolved by the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) alone. However, despite the deteriorating air quality, he noted that the Guangdong Provincial Government (GPG) was focusing more on control over water pollution rather than air pollution.

33. SETW said that to her understanding, GPG accorded equal attention to both water and air pollution but more resources were required for more effective control. To improve the air quality of the whole PRD Region, GPG and HKSAR Government jointly drew up the Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Management Plan (the Management Plan) with a view to meeting the emission reduction targets and both sides were actively following up on the tasks under the Management Plan. In Hong Kong, there had been significant improvements in roadside air quality after the implementation of a series of measures to control local sources of pollution, notably the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Taxi Scheme to control vehicle emissions. However, the increased level of pollutants generated from the industrial and commercial operations in the PRD Region had been adversely affecting the regional air quality.

34. Noting that there was not much improvement in air quality since April 2002 when GPG and HKSAR Government first reached consensus on the emission reduction targets, Mr LAU Kong-wah asked if the Administration was confident that the level of pollutants could be significantly reduced in time to meet the targets by 2010. SETW said that time was needed to bring about improvements to the regional air quality. Given the pace of economic development in the PRD Region, it was unlikely that the level of emissions could be reduced within a short period of time. However, both governments would keep the emission control measures under review on an annual basis to take account of the latest changes in development. DSETW(E)2 added that GPG and HKSAR Government had adopted a very transparent emission reduction policy which mainly focused on power plants, vehicles and the most polluting industrial processes, based on a four-step approach, namely research, target setting, planning and implementation. The first three steps had been completed and it was in the process of implementation, the details of which had been set out in the Administration's paper.

35. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that he was not optimistic that the emission targets could be met by 2010. He pointed out that while there were comprehensive and stringent environmental laws governing the performance of industrial activities in the Mainland, these were not strictly adhered to. Therefore, unless GPG took more drastic measures to meet the emission reduction targets, he failed to see how the air pollution problem could be resolved in the next 10 to 20 years. He asked if the Administration had any new initiatives to deal with the situation. SETW said that it had taken a long time for the two governments to reach consensus on the emission reduction targets and to draw up the Management Plan. However, these targets were to be met on a best endeavour basis based on the pace of development within the PRD Region. SETW added that while she did not share members' pessimism, she agreed

Action

that more efforts should be made to ensure sustainability of development in the PRD Region where environmental concerns might be compromised for the sake of economic growth. She supplemented that Hong Kong would play an active role in promoting environmental awareness through education and publicity in the PRD Region. By way of illustration, the HKSAR Government had participated in the promotional activities for the environment in Dongguan.

36. Ms Audrey EU held the view that the Administration should explain to the public the basis upon which the emission reduction targets were arrived at and the means to achieve these targets. Such information, together with the outcome of discussion with GPG, should be made available to interested organizations so that they could be able to give their views before the subject was discussed at a forthcoming meeting. SETW explained that in an attempt to prioritize air pollution control measures accordingly, the joint study on regional air quality carried out during 1999-2002 analysed the relative significance of different industrial and commercial sources of pollution and their direct and indirect impacts on regional air quality. This was done by quantifying the emissions of pollutants, collecting air samples and accurately evaluating the regional distribution of air pollutants and changes by computer simulation. The findings of the study had been uploaded on the Government website for public reference. The Administration would also liaise with the Guangdong authorities on the release of the air quality data from the joint network of 16 monitoring stations to see if improvements had been made. As regards making public the outcome of discussion with GPG, SETW advised that she had to consult the Guangdong authorities before deciding on whether such information could be disclosed.

37. Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired whether the Pearl River Delta Air Quality Management and Monitoring Special Panel set up under the Hong Kong/Guangdong Joint Working Group on Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection would have the needed authority to follow up on the tasks under the Management Plan. SETW said that the Joint Working Group reported to the Chief Executive of HKSAR and the Provincial Governor of GPG and both of them had undertaken to cooperate with each other to bring about improvements to the regional air quality.

38. The Chairman suggested that more scientific methods, such as satellite mapping and remote sensing, should be used to forecast pollution and to trace pollution sources more accurately to enhance control. SETW agreed that satellite mapping was very useful in tracing pollution sources and such technology was used by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Meanwhile, cooperation was being sought from the Hong Kong Observatory to enable more use of such technology in tracing pollution sources so that more effective measures could be adopted to reduce emissions.

39. Referring to Greenpeace's submission which stated that the air quality objectives (AQOs) in Hong Kong were outdated and overly relaxed as compared to European Union standards, SETW said that according to guidelines set by the World

Action

Health Organization, AQOs should be set according to local conditions so that suitable measures could be mapped out. It would be meaningless to set very high and unachievable standards. The setting of AQOs was a subject of much controversy as in the case of the United States where legal proceedings were instituted against their newly proposed AQOs.

Vehicle emissions

40. Ms Miriam LAU was concerned that despite the efforts being made to achieve the emission reduction targets by 2010, using 1997 as the base year, the air pollution problem could not be resolved in the midst of continued economic growth in the PRD Region. With the Mainland's accession to the World Trade Organization and the integration of economic activities within the PRD Region, more effective measures needed to be adopted to tackle the deteriorating regional air pollution problem. These included using natural gas to replace coal for generating electricity and using more environmentally friendly vehicles. She remarked that the current pace of vehicle emission reduction in Guangdong was way too slow as compared to Hong Kong. By way of illustration, newly registered vehicles in Hong Kong were required to comply with Euro III emission standards while those in the Mainland were only required to comply with Euro II emission standards. Besides, the sulphur content of diesel in the Mainland was 0.05% which was higher than that of 0.005% in Hong Kong. Given the success of the LPG Taxi Scheme in Hong Kong, she queried why consideration could not be given to using more environmentally friendly fuel in Guangdong. Citing the experience of Los Angeles in clearing the smog problem through the control of vehicle emissions, she hoped that the regional air pollution problem could be resolved with the joint efforts of both sides.

41. In response, SETW said that in reaching the consensus on the emission reduction targets for 2010, due consideration had been given to the economic growth in the PRD Region. As regards control of vehicle emissions in the Mainland, she said that while Euro II vehicles were in use in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, pre-Euro vehicles were still prevalent in other provinces. In implementing any vehicle emission policy, the Mainland authorities had to ensure that this would not have adverse impact on the vehicle manufacturing industry and the vehicles currently in use. Care had to be taken to strike a balance between economic development and environmental concerns given that there were 1.7 million vehicles in Guangzhou as compared to 0.5 million in Hong Kong, the scale of application of the vehicle emission policy was much wider.

42. While acknowledging that the control of vehicle emissions in Guangdong fell outside Hong Kong's jurisdiction, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong held the view that there were measures which could be adopted locally to mitigate the roadside pollution problem in Hong Kong. These included further increasing the penalty for smoky vehicles from \$1,000 to \$1,500 to bring it on par with the penalty for littering since the emission of smoke was a more serious offence given its irrevocable damage to air quality and public health. The heavier penalty would achieve a greater deterrent

Action

effect and assist in improving roadside air quality as evidenced by the drop in the number of smoky vehicles when the penalty was last increased from \$450 to \$1,000. SETW thanked Mr CHEUNG for his suggestion. She concurred that the increase in penalty for smoky vehicles would certainly help enhance the deterrent effect but the proposal would need further public consultation.

43. Mr Martin LEE said that Members of the Democratic Party had called for the implementation of full-scale bus-bus interchange (BBI) scheme in the Central Business District (CBD) with a view to relieving traffic congestion and to achieve further improvements in air quality. Under the scheme, all cross-harbour bus traffic coming from Kowloon and the New Territories via Western Cross Harbour Tunnel or Cross Harbour Tunnel/ Eastern Harbour Crossing would terminate at Sheung Wan and Causeway Bay respectively. Interchange passengers could then make use of shuttle services run by environmentally friendly buses for onward journeys to CBD. SETW said that while she would be pleased to introduce BBI scheme, this would not be welcomed by the public who would prefer to have direct point-to-point bus service rather than bus-bus interchange even with fare concession. The proposal would also unlikely have the support of District Councils, which had been repeatedly requesting for more convenient bus routes to serve their districts. She stressed that it was only through protracted negotiations with District Councils and ongoing efforts to rationalize bus routes could the Administration be able to reduce the number of buses by 17%.

44. Mr Martin LEE noted that concerted efforts were required to promote the BBI scheme, and that the public should be apprised of the environmental benefits and the time saved as a result of the scheme. In this connection, political parties and District Councillors should be advised not to include request for new bus routes as one of their policy directions. SETW said that the Administration would be willing to explore the feasibility of BBI scheme provided that it had the support from political parties.

45. As deteriorating air quality would dampen overseas investments, Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that more effective measures should be taken to improve the air quality given the extent of investment being made in the PRD Region. SETW advised that with the expedition in the pace of conversion to cleaner vehicles and tightening of diesel emission standards in Guangdong, the situation was expected to improve in due course. Noting that the manpower resources released from the merger between the Environmental Branch of ETWB and EPD could be deployed to widen the exchanges with Guangdong on vehicle emission technologies, Dr KWOK Ka-ki requested for a progress report on the deployment. SETW said that a definite deployment plan was not available at this stage.

Emissions from power plants

46. In response to Ms Miriam LAU's question, SETW explained that the two governments had agreed to use natural gas for generating electricity as far as practicable. In fact, four liquefied natural gas power plants were being constructed in

Action

Guangdong for commissioning in 2006. In Hong Kong, nuclear energy, coal and natural gas had more or less the same share in power generation in the past. However, more reliance on coal was seen nowadays as a result of unstable supply of natural gas. Owing to some technical problems, the reserve of natural gas at Hainan Island was reported to be reduced which had in turn affected the operation of the natural gas power station at Blackpoint. To ensure sufficient supply of natural gas, alternative means such as a suitable site was being searched for storage of natural gas and using marine transport to convey natural gas. Meanwhile, the Administration was exploring the feasibility of developing renewable energy in Hong Kong. Ms Miriam LAU however pointed out that at an earlier meeting of the Panel on Economic Services, members were informed that the supply of natural gas had remained steady over the years.

47. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed regret that power plants in Hong Kong had to rely on coal in power generation. Given the urgent need to reduce emissions, he considered that the Administration should endeavour to identify suitable storage depot for natural gas and to persuade power companies to refrain from using coal. SETW explained that the supply of electricity by the two power companies in Hong Kong was governed by the Scheme of Control Agreement. As such, the Administration could only require them to abide by the emission standards but could not unilaterally alter the terms of the agreement nor prevent them from using coal in power generation.

48. Ms Emily LAU noted with concern about the allegation that emissions from the power plants owned by the CLP Power Limited (CLP) had increased 90% in 2002-03. She questioned if this had anything to do with the reduced supply of natural gas and whether the two power companies had endeavoured to control emissions as part of their social and corporate responsibilities. Noting from paragraph 19(a) of the Administration's paper that a greater share of natural gas and other clean fuels (e.g. waste-to-energy) in power generation might raise the production cost of electricity, Ms LAU considered it necessary that the public should be apprised of the financial implications of using cleaner fuel. SETW advised that CLP had set out in its annual report the amounts of coal and natural gas used in power generation. As a responsible corporation, it should strive to reduce the emissions from power generation. The Administration would also liaise with the two power companies to work out an economically viable and environmentally acceptable solution to control emissions from power plants.

49. Mr LEE Wing-tat enquired about the number of power plants in Guangdong which had not been installed or retrofitted with flue gas desulphurization systems. SETW said that she believed that there was a quite a number of such power plants in Guangdong. Owing to insufficient power supply, some of these closed power plants had to be reactivated for use. The Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment)<sup>3</sup> supplemented that flue gas desulphurization systems were installed in Shenzhen Xibu Power Plant (Units 5 and 6), Dongguan Shajiao Power Plant A (Unit 5) and Taishan Power Plant (Units 1 and 2) during the year. Retrofitting works for Shenzhen Mawan Power Plant, three power plants in

Action

Shajiao of Dongguan, Guangzhou Huangpu Power Plant, Zhujiang Power Plant and Zhuhai Power Plant had also commenced and were expected to complete in 2005-06. Preparation for retrofitting other power plants in the region was also underway. The target was to retrofit all power generation units of a capacity above 125MW with flue gas desulphurization systems by 2007 so that 70% of all power plants would be so equipped by then.

50. As regards the measures being adopted by the HKSAR Government to assist in reducing emissions from Guangdong power plants, SETW advised that the Administration was exploring with the Environmental Protection Bureau of Guangdong Province on ways to set up an emissions trading pilot scheme covering the power plants in Hong Kong and Guangdong. With the introduction of the scheme, participating power plants would install desulphurization systems to reduce the pollution load based on need. While the Mainland authorities had yet to determine the acceptable pollution load of power plants, they were looking into the feasibility of transmission of electricity from west to east. There were plans to develop renewable energy in the underdeveloped provinces of the west with a view to exporting it to the more developed cities in the east. This would serve the dual purposes of improving the economy of the west while reducing emissions in the east. However, a number of issues such as technical feasibility as well as supply and demand of electricity had remained to be resolved.

51. Having regard to the latest development of renewable energy in the Mainland, Ir Dr Raymond HO enquired whether the application of renewable energy on a greater scale could be introduced in Hong Kong through joint ventures with Mainland counterparts. SETW advised that while Hong Kong was interested in developing renewable energy jointly with the Mainland, plans for such development had yet to be worked out. There was also a need for technological exchange on the means for developing renewable energy.

52. In view of the importance of air pollution control, Ms Emily LAU considered it necessary to hold another meeting to continue discussion on the subject and to invite views from the public. The meeting might be jointly held with the Panel on Economic Services and the two power companies should be invited to attend. She also requested the Administration to provide a written response to the submission from Greenpeace.

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**VII. Any other business**

53. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:13 pm.