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Legislative Council

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Panel on Security

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Monday, 17 January 2011, at 8:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon James TO Kun-sun (Chairman)
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Members attending : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

Members absent : Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
Hon CHIM Pui-chung
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun

Public Officers : Item I
attending

Mr LAI Tung-kwok, SBS, IDSM, JP
Under Secretary for Security

Miss Shirley YUNG Pui-man
Deputy Secretary for Security

Miss Katharine CHOI
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment (Energy)

Mr Richard LANCASTER
Managing Director
CLP Power Hong Kong Limited

Mr S H CHAN
Managing Director
Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Company Limited

Ms Daisy CHAN
Public Affairs Director
CLP Power Hong Kong Limited

Mr Richard FUNG
Technical Manager
Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Company Limited

Professor LEE Chack-fan
Vice Chairman
Nuclear Safety Consultative Committee of the
Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station and the
Lingao Nuclear Power Station

Item II

Mr LAI Tung-kwok, SBS, IDSM, JP
Under Secretary for Security

Miss Shirley YUNG Pui-man
Deputy Secretary for Security

Mr CHAN Chor-kam, FSDSM
Deputy Director of Fire Services

Mr WONG Sai-chuen, FSMSM
Chief Fire Officer (Headquarters)
Fire Services Department

Mr Charles CHOW Chi-ping
Project Director (2)
Architectural Services Department

Item III

Mr LAI Tung-kwok, SBS, IDSM, JP
Under Secretary for Security

Miss Shirley YUNG Pui-man
Deputy Secretary for Security

Mr CHAN Chor-kam, FSDSM
Deputy Director of Fire Services

Mr WONG Sai-chuen, FSMSM
Chief Fire Officer (Headquarters)
Fire Services Department

Mr YUK Wai-fung
Assistant Director, Efficiency Unit (2)
Chief Secretary for Administration's Office

Clerk in attendance : Mr Raymond LAM
Chief Council Secretary (2) 1

Staff in attendance : Miss Josephine SO
Senior Council Secretary (2) 1

Miss Jenny LEE
Administrative Assistant (SD)

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I. Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station Notification Mechanism - Progress Report

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)767/10-11(01)-(02) and CB(2)805/10-11(01))

Under Secretary for Security ("US for S") briefed Members on the progress of review on the notification mechanism for the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station ("DBNPS") and the measures taken by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") to address public concern about enhancing the transparency of the operation of DBNPS, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

2. Mr Richard LANCASTER, Managing Director of CLP Power Hong Kong Limited ("CLP") and Mr S H CHAN, Managing Director of Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Company Limited ("HKNIC") briefed Members, with the aid of powerpoint presentation, on the new notification mechanism for Licensing Operational Events ("LOEs") under the International Nuclear Event Scale ("INES") which did not involve emergency response, including those classified at Level 0 and Level 1, as well as events at Level 2 or above but not involving emergency response ("non-emergency LOEs") and for matters falling outside the classification of INES, i.e. below Level 0 but might still cause concern to the public or the media.

(Post-meeting note: The softcopy of the powerpoint presentation materials was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)844/10-11(01) on 17 January 2011.)

Timing of public disclosure of information on non-emergency LOEs

3. Mr WONG Kwok-hing welcomed the implementation of the new information disclosure mechanism to enhance the communication with the public as well as the transparency of the operation of DBNPS. Noting that under the new arrangement, the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Operations and Management Company Limited ("DNMC"), which was responsible for the management and operation of DBNPS, would notify HKNIC within two working days of any non-emergency LOE at DBNPS once it was discovered and confirmed, he asked whether there was room for further improvement in this respect with a view to expediting the information disclosure process so as to avoid any unnecessary speculation in the community.

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4. Mr Richard LANCASTER responded that -
 - (a) as a matter of principle, DNMC would look into the matter immediately in case of a LOE that occurred at DBNPS. For a non-emergency LOE, HKNIC would publish information through its website within two working days after DNMC discovered and confirmed such a LOE at the power station;
 - (b) while in many cases the disclosure of information could be made well within the two working-day limit, there might be cases where the gathering and preparation of information for release to the public might need more time than usual due to the complicated nature of these cases;
 - (c) it should be noted that premature release of information without any contexts might create undue concern in the society;
 - (d) HKNIC fully recognized public concern over nuclear safety. Even though a non-emergency LOE would not affect the safe operation of the nuclear power station and had no impact on the external environment and public safety, HKNIC would render its full effort to the new information disclosure mechanism to release information in a timely and proactive manner; and
 - (e) the new notification mechanism was introduced with the ultimate purpose of strengthening HKNIC's communication with the public and enhancing public understanding of safety and operation at the nuclear power station.

5. Prof LEE Chack-fan said that the new notification arrangements for non-emergency LOEs at DBNPS had struck a reasonable balance between timeliness and technical requirements. He further said that a nuclear power station itself was a very complex facility. It would not always be practicable to report a non-emergency LOE immediately as the operators would often need time to assess the situation and ascertain the source of the LOE.

6. The Deputy Chairman said that despite the enhancement to the information disclosure mechanism, the lead time required for verifying, confirming and disclosing to the public information on a non-emergency LOE which occurred at DBNPS was still too long, in particular when the

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actual time of public disclosure might be days after the occurrence of the LOE due to intervening holidays. The Deputy Chairman held the view that a time limit shorter than two working days for confirming and disclosing information on non-emergency LOEs should be considered.

7. Echoing the Deputy Chairman's view, Ms Audrey EU and Ms Emily LAU considered that the time limit should be revised to read "within 48 hours from the identification of any non-emergency LOE".

8. Dr PAN Pey-chyou said that to his knowledge, people in the Mainland normally worked five days a week from Monday to Friday with days-off on Saturday and Sunday. The five-day week work pattern would inevitably delay the assessment and information disclosure processes, particularly when there were long public holidays, such as Lunar New Year Holidays and National Day Holidays. He shared the view that the timing of public disclosure should be set against 48 hours as a benchmark or alternatively, be counted in calendar days. His view was echoed by Dr LAM Tai-fai.

9. In response, Mr S H CHAN advised that HKNIC would in principle notify the public as soon as possible information on a non-emergency LOE through its website and in any case not later than two working days after DNMC had discovered and confirmed a non-emergency LOE at DBNPS. Mr CHAN also advised that under the new arrangement, information published through HKNIC's website would include a brief description of the LOE, the initial classification of the event and a preliminary assessment of the impact of the event on the environment and public safety. HKNIC would notify the Security Bureau ("SB") and the Environment Bureau at the same time, which was an improvement to the existing practice of making monthly reports to the HKSAR Government through its representatives at the Board of Directors of HKNIC.

10. Ms Audrey EU and Dr Margaret NG expressed concern whether the processes of discovery and confirmation in respect of LOEs at DBNPS would take place at the same time without any time gap. Knowing that a number of sites in the Guangdong Province had been identified for developing nuclear power stations, Dr NG expressed concern about the potential risk to Hong Kong residents and the environment. She enquired whether the Mainland authorities had conducted comprehensive risk assessments for each of the projects.

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11. In response, US for S advised that -
 - (a) regarding emergency arrangement and risk assessment on nuclear incidents, there had been an international practice and a practice adopted by the Mainland to develop contingency plan based on the distance from nuclear power stations. According to practices commonly adopted internationally, in case of nuclear incidents, full countermeasures had to be considered for an area within 10 km to 16 km from the nuclear power station, to prevent direct exposure to radiation or inhalation of airborne radioactivity. Ingestion pathway countermeasures had to be considered for an area within 50 km to 80 km from the nuclear power station, to prevent the intake of contaminated food, water or milk by the public;
 - (b) among the existing and planned nuclear power stations in the Guangdong Province, DBNPS was the closest to Hong Kong. It was about 20 km away from the nearest landmass of Hong Kong and 50 km away from the city centre. Since the operation of DBNPS, the governments of Hong Kong and Guangdong had established contingency and notification mechanisms on emergency arrangements for the nuclear power station. Cooperation agreement and information exchange on emergency response had also been worked out. The cooperation, emergency response and notification arrangements were set out in the Daya Bay Contingency Plan; and
 - (c) other nuclear power stations under construction or planning, were over 130 km away from Hong Kong.
12. As regards the discovery and confirmation of LOEs at DBNPS, Mr S H CHAN advised that except for those cases which were complicated in nature, the two processes were normally carried out at the same time.
13. Ms Emily LAU pointed out that both the Guangdong Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station, i.e. DBNPS, and the Lingao Nuclear Power Station ("LNPS") were located at the Daya Bay site. She asked whether the new notification arrangements set out in the Annex to the Administration's paper would be applied to both of these stations.

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14. US for S responded that over the past few months, the HKSAR Government had in-depth discussion with HKNIC and the Mainland shareholder of DBNPS, namely the China Guangdong Nuclear Power Holding Company Limited, on the enhancement to the notification mechanism. It was agreed that the new notification arrangements should apply to DBNPS at the initial stage. The HKSAR Government would continue its discussion with the relevant parties, with a view to extending the application of the new arrangements to LNPS.

Notification mechanism for emergency LOEs

15. The Deputy Chairman noted that in case of an emergency LOE at DBNPS, the station operator would immediately inform the Prevention and Emergency Administrative Commission Office of Guangdong Province for Nuclear Accident of Civil Nuclear Facility ("PEACO/GD") and the latter would notify the HKSAR Government via the Hong Kong Observatory ("HKO"). He asked whether in future, PEACO/GD could notify SB direct as to do so could help speed up the assessment process and if necessary, the activation of the Daya Bay Contingency Plan.

16. Sharing the view of the Deputy Chairman, Ms Emily LAU said that SB should assume the overall responsibilities for directing and coordinating the HKSAR Government's response to nuclear emergencies regardless of the severity of the events.

17. In response, US for S explained that the current notification mechanism had two communication channels. On one hand, CLP was obliged to notify the Administration of any LOE that occurred at DBNPS in accordance with the established notification system between the Administration and CLP/HKNIC. On the other hand, the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong authorities had signed an emergency response cooperation agreement, under which the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong authorities had established an official contingency notification channel. In the event of any emergency LOE at DBNPS, the station operator would immediately inform PEACO/GD and other relevant state organizations. PEACO/GD would notify the HKSAR Government in accordance with the agreed arrangements and the classification of "emergency situation" which followed the four-category system of the International Atomic Energy Agency ("IAEA") for classifying nuclear emergencies having regard to their impact on safety.

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18. Deputy Secretary for Security supplemented that under the Daya Bay Contingency Plan, the HKSAR Government had set up an emergency structure to handle nuclear accidents/incidents. In case of an emergency, the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre ("EMSC"), managed by SB, would coordinate the HKSAR Government's response and keep close contact with the Guangdong authorities to obtain the latest information on the accident/incident. It should be noted that HKO was one of the key departments providing technical support to EMSC. When HKO was notified of an emergency LOE at DBNPS, it would coordinate the monitoring of radiation and assess the associated consequences immediately. HKO's Environmental Radiation Monitoring Network, consisting of 10 field stations, monitored on a round-the-clock basis the ambient gamma radiation level of Hong Kong. To ensure the effectiveness of the communication channels, the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong authorities also conducted monthly direct communication tests, which included tests on communication by phone and fax, and on-line communication.

19. In reply to Ms Audrey EU's enquiry on how LOEs which occurred at DBNPS were confirmed and classified, Mr S H CHAN advised that DBNPS adopted the INES rating system. In case of a LOE, which would be rated at Level 0 or above on INES, DBNPS would, in accordance with Mainland statutory requirements, report the event to the relevant state regulatory body, namely the National Nuclear Safety Administration ("NNSA"). NNSA would handle the matter accordingly, including examining and confirming the contents of the report and the actual classification of the LOE. NNSA also had a number of inspectors stationed on-site at DBNPS to monitor station safety and operation.

20. In response to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's enquiry about NNSA, Mr Richard LANCASTER advised that -

- (a) given the importance of nuclear safety, international organizations on nuclear safety had been set up and international conventions on various nuclear-related issues were in place. IAEA was responsible for formulating safety guidelines on the use of nuclear power for its member countries, including China. It also concluded safeguard agreements with its member countries. China was also a signatory of a number of IAEA's conventions on nuclear-related issues, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident; and

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- (b) the construction and operation of nuclear power stations in the Mainland were regulated according to the relevant national safety regulations for civilian nuclear facilities. The Ministry of Environmental Protection ("MEP") was responsible for monitoring nuclear facilities in the country, including environmental protection-related duties such as prevention of radiation pollution. NNSA was a regulatory body under MEP and responsible for the safety oversight of nuclear facilities, with the use of on-site safety inspection and monitoring through its regional offices.

Disclosure of supplementary information

21. Expressing concern about the arrangement for disclosing supplementary information, Ms Audrey EU asked whether HKNIC would, besides releasing information through its website, issue press releases and hold press briefings to inform the public of the occurrence of non-emergency LOEs at DBNPS.

22. In response, Mr S H CHAN advised that in accordance with Mainland regulations, DNMC should make a written report to NNSA within 30 days after obtaining the detailed facts upon completion of a thorough investigation into a LOE. After DNMC had submitted the report to NNSA, HKNIC would, where necessary, arrange to disclose through its website further details of the investigation, including the process of the LOE, the actual impact of the LOE and the follow-up actions taken. Mr CHAN assured Members that for a LOE occurred at DBNPS, HKNIC would make use of necessary channels, including press releases or briefings, to keep members of the public abreast of the development of the relevant LOE.

23. Dr PAN Pey-chyou and Dr LAM Tai-fai held the view that in case of a LOE, whether it was of an emergency or non-emergency nature, which might affect the normal operation of the power stations in Daya Bay, information to be disclosed should be presented in a clear and easy to understand manner, so as to help the public understand more about the matters.

24. US for S said that the Administration fully appreciated the need to set out in simple and plain language information about LOEs at DBNPS, without compromising the accuracy of the information disseminated. In case of an emergency LOE, the Administration would, upon obtaining the

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relevant information/professional advice and assessment of the consequences, inform the public in detail about the accident/incident, including its impact on public safety and the countermeasures that should be taken in the HKSAR. For non-emergency LOEs and those matters with public and media concerns, as HKNIC would put in place a new disclosure mechanism, concerns about the content of the information to be disclosed and the need to employ simple and easy to understand terms in the provision of information had been raised to HKNIC and the Mainland authorities for consideration and follow-up.

25. Mr S H CHAN advised that HKNIC had examined how further effort would be made additional to the mechanism for disclosing information on non-emergency LOEs and those matters which might attract public and media concerns with improved transparency, timeliness as well as method of communication. In the future, HKNIC would continue to step up its efforts on public education through plant visits, seminars, exhibitions and web-based information to facilitate better understanding by the public of nuclear safety and operation at the nuclear power station.

Way forward

26. The Chairman said that when the proposal to form a subcommittee to review the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station Notification Mechanism was discussed at the meeting on 7 December 2010, members agreed to defer the consideration of the proposal of forming a subcommittee until after having discussed the latest developments at this meeting. The Chairman invited members' views on the need to form a subcommittee to review the notification mechanism.

27. Members generally considered that there was no need to form a subcommittee under the Panel to review the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station Notification Mechanism. Members agreed that the matter should be kept in view and the need of forming a subcommittee could be re-considered if the situation so warranted.

28. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide an update on the subject in five months, so that the subject could be discussed again at a Panel meeting before the end of the 2010-2011 legislative session, if necessary.

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II. Construction of fire station-cum-ambulance facility at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay
(LC Paper No. CB(2)767/10-11(03))

29. US for S briefed Members on the Administration's proposal to construct a fire station with ambulance facility and an urban search and rescue equipment store at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

30. Members noted that the Administration planned to submit the funding proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee for consideration in June 2011. No question was raised on the Administration's proposal.

III. Review on procurement of fire services equipment
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)767/10-11(04) and (05))

31. US for S and Deputy Director of Fire Services ("DDFS") briefed Members on the Administration's plan to accept and implement in full the recommendations put forward by the Efficiency Unit ("EU") regarding the procurement of fire services equipment, as set out in the Administration's paper.

32. Assistant Director, Efficiency Unit (2) presented the main findings of the management study conducted by EU on procurement and related management issues of Fire Services Department ("FSD") as well as the recommendations set out in EU's study report.

33. Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that EU's findings had highlighted the shortcomings in FSD's existing procurement mechanism. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the "belated awareness" of the FSD management to identify at an earlier time areas of improvement to the processes and procedures relating to the procurement of fire services equipment, and asked whether the FSD management had learned any lesson.

34. In response, DDFS made the following points -

- (a) the FSD management attached great importance to ensuring the safety of frontline fire-fighting personnel and providing them with safe and reliable fire services equipment and facilities;

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- (b) on an annual basis, FSD made several thousands of procurement of various items;
- (c) due to manpower constraints, FSD had adopted a decentralized procurement mode. There were experienced fire services personnel in different units to process the procurement of respective fire services equipment;
- (d) to enhance procurement efficiency and accountability, EU had recommended the establishment of a dedicated Procurement Group and the creation of four new posts with clear roles and responsibilities to coordinate all procurement projects within FSD; and
- (e) while the FSD management welcomed the recommendations of EU and would take steps to implement the improvement measures in EU's study report, FSD would continue to expedite the procurement and replacement of various fire services equipment. As a matter of fact, FSD and relevant departments had reached a consensus to make an early start on the initial procurement procedures, including the drafting of specifications and tender documents. This would enable FSD and relevant departments to award the procurement contract as soon as possible upon securing funding approval.

35. Mr WONG Kwok-hing questioned the effectiveness of the improvement measures recommended by EU, including the setting up of a dedicated Procurement Group and the provision of additional manpower for taking up procurement-related duties, in solving all the problems in FSD with its management and administration. In his view, a cultural change should be induced to raise the awareness of FSD's senior management, so that it would have a good understanding of the existing situation and could take a more proactive approach in tackling problems associated with the procurement of fire services equipment.

36. DDFS responded that the FSD management accepted the recommendations of EU in full and would make every endeavour to improve the process for procurement of fire services equipment.

37. Dr Margaret NG noted with grave concern that the management study of EU had identified many issues of great importance in the areas of procurement process, organization, performance management and information technology. She expressed strong dissatisfaction with the

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failure of the Administration to have the issues listed out in paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper timely identified and addressed. Expressing regret over the loss of innocent lives in the No. 5 Alarm fire at Cornwall Court, Dr NG said that the tragic event could have been avoided if the Administration had made effort at an earlier time to improve the procurement process of fire services equipment. She requested the Administration to provide the full report of the management study conducted by EU on procurement and related management issues of FSD.

38. US for S advised that the study report compiled by EU was readily available in English, and arrangement had been made for its translation into Chinese. He undertook to provide the English version of the study report within the same day and the Chinese version of the full report once available.

(Post-meeting note: The English version of EU's study report was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)835/10-11 on 17 January 2011.)

39. As regards the recommendations made by EU, US for S reiterated that SB and FSD had accepted them in full. FSD had already set up a working group to follow up the implementation of the improvement measures put forth in EU's study report. In addition, SB would set up a task force comprising representatives from SB, FSD and EU to monitor the progress of implementation.

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40. Dr Margaret NG, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Dr PAN Pey-chyou expressed strong dissatisfaction that the Administration had not provided in its paper a concrete timetable for implementing the improvement measures proposed by EU. They requested the Administration to provide a concrete timetable for the implementation of EU's recommendations.

41. Responding to Dr Margaret NG's enquiry as to whether the FSD management had any plan to engage representatives of staff unions as members of the task force to monitor the implementation progress of the recommendations put forward by EU, DDFS advised that during the course of the study, EU had consulted frontline staff of FSD and visited various units responsible for procurement and acceptance testing as well as the end-user units. EU had also taken into account the views raised by staff representatives. The Administration would seriously consider Members' suggestion of engaging staff representatives to take part in the follow-up work.

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42. Dr LAM Tai-fai hoped that the recommendations proposed by EU in its study report should be put into implementation without delay. He asked when the proposal of forming the dedicated Procurement Group would be implemented, and whether interim measures for procurement of fire services equipment would be adopted before its establishment and the full implementation of EU's recommendations.

43. DDFS advised that EU had, among others, proposed that a dedicated Procurement Group be set up by reorganizing FSD's Safety and Logistics Group and creating new posts. To follow up this specific improvement measure, the Administration had embarked on the preparatory work, with a view to completing the reorganization in April 2011. Before the commissioning of the integrated computer system, as a short-term measure to improve the replacement process of uniforms, FSD would make arrangement for their personnel to place order electronically and build up comprehensive records on the consumption and inventory level of individual sizes of uniforms, including fire tunics and over trousers.

44. Dr PAN Pey-chyou said that under section 6 of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509), an employer was required to ensure the safety and health of their employees at work. As the laws of Hong Kong also applied to the Government, the FSD management should attach importance to the work safety of its frontline staff. Referring to the No. 5 Alarm fire at Cornwall Court in August 2008 which caused the death of two firemen, Dr PAN said that there were media reports that the radio communications equipment provided to firemen failed to function properly at the fire scenes. He considered it unacceptable that the FSD management had put up with the situation, especially its failure to ensure that all fire services equipment and apparatus were maintained at a high standard.

45. In response, DDFS said that in using the fire ground channels for fire scene communications and hand-held radio sets operated in the "direct mode" for signal transmission, the transmission of radio signals would be affected by physical constraints which included the existence of floor slabs, walls, smoke, humidity and heat etc. In the Cornwall Court incident, there was evidence suggesting that radio messages sent by the fire crew were overheard by other crew members. Before the incident at Cornwall Court, FSD had already started the preparatory work for replacing the analogue radio communications system by a new digital system. The new system was expected to commence operation in July 2011. It would offer improved voice quality, better protection

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against radio interference and "channel jamming". In addition, an emergency button would be provided in each hand-held radio set for use by frontline staff in case of emergency. To enhance radio communications inside buildings, FSD would procure portable repeaters and install mobile repeaters on ambulances and fire appliances for enhancing the transmission of radio signals at the fire scenes. With the implementation of these measures, voice communications at fire scenes would be improved.

46. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry as to whether the digital system could secure an uninterrupted communication environment for firemen at the fire scenes, DDFS said that although the new digital radio communications system could enhance reliability and indoor communication coverage, physical constraints, such as floor slabs, walls, smoke, humidity and heat etc, might still cause disruption to radio communications. Nevertheless, the problem could be alleviated through the deployment of portable repeaters at the fire scenes.

47. The Chairman informed Members that he had requested the Administration to provide a copy of the verbatim transcript of the hearing of the Coroner's Court of the Cornwall Court Fire. The document would be made available to Members for perusal, once ready.

48. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan sought an update from the Administration on the following issues -

- (a) whether all frontline staff were provided with hand-held communications devices during fire fighting and rescue operations;
- (b) whether all the fire tunics and overtrousers for replacement had been delivered and provided to firemen; and
- (c) whether the Administration would accede to the request of FSD staff unions to reduce the conditioned hours of work of FSD staff from 54 to 48 hours per week.

49. In response, DDFS advised that FSD had explored ways to improve radio communications and agreed that for operations requiring the use of breathing apparatus, each wearer would be provided with a hand-held radio set. Regarding the staff unions' proposal to reduce the conditioned hours of work for staff of FSD's Fire Stream from 54 to 48 hours per week, DDFS said that it was difficult to reduce the conditioned

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hours of work of FSD staff while fulfilling the three pre-requisites laid down by the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service, including cost neutrality, non-involvement of additional manpower and maintenance of the same level of service to the public. Nevertheless, FSD would continue its discussion with FSD staff unions on how the conditioned hours of work could be reduced.

50. The Deputy Chairman recalled that at previous meetings of the Panel, representatives of FSD staff unions had expressed concerns over the slow progress in the preparation of the Chinese translation of the operating/training manuals on various fire fighting and rescue equipment, and the incompatibility between different makes/models of the same equipment/apparatus currently in use. He asked whether and how the problems were addressed.

51. DDFS responded that -

- (a) to help frontline personnel to familiarize themselves, in the shortest possible time, with the functions and operations of equipment and apparatus, FSD had arranged for the translation of some 120 operating manuals on various fire fighting and rescue equipment into Chinese. The manuals had also been uploaded onto FSD's intranet; and
- (b) it was unavoidable that equipment or apparatus with the same function but supplied by different manufacturers might need to be used concurrently. However, the principles of operation for the same type of apparatus supplied by different manufacturers should be very similar. For apparatus with more complex operation, FSD would arrange training for frontline staff by the manufacturer concerned or trained professionals. Therefore, the use of apparatus with the same function but purchased from different manufacturers would not affect the operational efficiency or safety of frontline staff.

52. Dr Margaret NG suggested that pending the Administration's provision of the full report of the management study conducted by EU and a concrete timetable for the implementation of the recommendations therein contained, the subject matter should be followed up at a future meeting.

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53. The meeting ended at 10:50 am.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 February 2011