

(Revised)

立法會

*Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Development**

**Meeting on 24 November 2015**

### **Proposed overseas duty visit to Singapore**

#### **Purpose**

This paper invites members to consider a proposal for the Panel on Development ("the Panel") to conduct an overseas duty visit to Singapore to study the country's experience in diversifying the sources of water supply, including the development of seawater desalination and water reclamation.

#### **Background**

2. The fresh water resources in Hong Kong come from the yield collected from local gathering ground and raw water imported from Dongjiang ("DJ") in Guangdong Province. However, these resources are facing various challenges, including increasing water demand, fluctuating local yield, climate change, as well as keen competition for DJ water resources due to the rapid economic development in the Pearl River Delta Region. According to the Administration, the water resources available in DJ and the yield collected from the local water gathering ground may not be able to meet the water demand of Hong Kong during a more severe drought with a return period of 1 in 100 years after 2020. To safeguard secure water supply in Hong Kong, the Administration is developing new water resources which are insensitive to climate change, such as seawater desalination and water reclamation.

3. With the support of the Panel and the endorsement of the Public Works Subcommittee, the Administration obtained the approval of the Finance Committee on 26 June 2015 for a funding of \$154.5 million in money-of-the-day prices for carrying out an investigation study review, design

and associated site investigation works for developing the first stage of a desalination plant to be constructed in Tseung Kwan O. The review and the works, planned to start in late 2015 for completion in 2017, will be followed by site formation works, construction works and water main laying works, etc., at a later stage. The first stage of the plant is targeted for commissioning in 2020.

4. On 26 June 2015, Hon Albert CHAN proposed in a letter to the Panel Chairman that a duty visit to Israel be conducted to study the policy matters and technology related to seawater desalination. His suggestion was discussed at the Panel's meeting on 22 July 2015. The Panel requested the Legislative Council Secretariat to conduct research on the development of seawater desalination technology in selected places to facilitate the Panel's consideration of the matter. After deliberating the information given in the Information Notes<sup>1</sup> prepared by the Research Office at the meetings on 9 October and 10 November 2015, the Panel agreed in principle that it should conduct a duty visit to Singapore for about four days during the Easter break in 2016 to study the country's experience in diversifying the sources of water supply, including the development of seawater desalination and water reclamation. Members considered that relevant knowledge of and updates on Singapore's experience would benefit the planning for water resources development in Hong Kong in the next five to 10 years.

### **Objectives of the proposed visit**

5. The objectives of the proposed visit are proposed as follows --
- (a) to study Singapore's experience, policies and strategies on water supply management;
  - (b) to obtain first-hand information on the development, operation and cost-effectiveness of seawater desalination and water reclamation in Singapore; and
  - (c) to exchange views with the relevant parties involved in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies on water supply management.

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<sup>1</sup> FS07/14-15 (Seawater Desalination Technologies), FS08/14-15 (Seawater Desalination in Israel), FS09/14-15 (Seawater Desalination in Singapore) and FS10/14-15 (Seawater Desalination in Australia)

6. In the light of the occurrence of the incidents in the past few months in which the drinking water at consumers' taps in some public housing estates, residential buildings, hospitals and schools was found to have a lead content exceeding the World Health Organization's standard, Dr Hon Helena WONG has suggested that the practice and experience of overseas cities in ensuring the safety of drinking water be studied. Members may wish to take the opportunity of conducting the proposed visit to learn about the measures taken by the Singapore government to safeguard the quality of piped drinking water.

### **Proposed timing and arrangements for the visit**

#### Proposed timing

7. It is proposed that the visit should take place from **20 (Sunday)<sup>2</sup> to 23 (Wednesday) March 2016**, mainly for the following reasons –

- (a) to avoid clashing with major activities of the Council<sup>3</sup>;
- (b) to avoid scheduling the visit on a weekend or during the Easter holiday of Singapore; and
- (c) to allow sufficient lead time for preparation and liaison.

#### Tentative visit programme

8. It is preliminarily planned that the duty visit to Singapore should cover the following parties/facilities --

- (a) the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore;
- (b) the Public Utilities Board (the national water agency) ("PUB");
- (c) the National Environment Agency (which regulates the quality of piped drinking water supplied by PUB and other suppliers);
- (d) the relevant committee(s) (if any) in the Singapore Parliament tasked to oversee matters related to water supply and quality;

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<sup>2</sup> It is proposed that the delegation depart from Hong Kong to Singapore on the afternoon or evening of 20 March 2016 (Sunday), so that they may start official activities in the morning of the next day (21 March, Monday).

<sup>3</sup> The last meeting of the Legislative Council in March 2016 will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday).

- (e) the two desalination plants (SingSpring and Tuaspring); and
- (f) NEWater (reclaimed water) plants.

9. A tentative visit programme is in **Appendix I**. The Panel will seek the advice and assistance of the Consulate-General of the Republic of Singapore in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office in Singapore to line up relevant parties and draw up a detailed visit programme.

### Participation

10. Under Rule 29A(b) of the House Rules, Members joining a visit of a committee should participate in the entire programme. The committee may invite other Members who are not members of the committee to take part in the visit provided that these Members are also able to participate in the entire programme. In this regard, members are invited to consider whether non-Panel Members should be invited to join the proposed visit.

11. In view of the nature of the proposed visit, which cover technological and technical issues, members may wish to consider inviting officials from the relevant policy bureau/government department to join the visit, so as to facilitate Members' understanding of the relevant technologies and the applicability of Singapore's experience to Hong Kong. In line with the established practice, the expenses incurred by the government officials participating in the visit will be borne by the Government.

### **Budget and funding arrangements**

12. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission, each Member is provided with an overseas duty visit account ("ODV") of \$55,000 for the purpose of duty visits outside Hong Kong organized by committees of the Council. The fund in the account is for use by the Member in a four-year term. Any expenditure incurred in one term in excess of the approved allocation has to be paid by the Member personally. If by the end of a term there are unused balances in Members' ODV accounts, the funds available will be used to pay those Members who have expended more than their allocation, in proportion to their excess qualifying expenditure. Members who have not served out their terms will not be entitled to such reimbursements.

13. A ballpark estimate of the expenditure (including airfare, hotel accommodation, meals, in-town travelling and sundry expenses) to be incurred by each participating Member for the proposed duty visit is about \$13,000. A breakdown of the estimated expenditure is in **Appendix II**. The actual expenditure will vary subject to the final visit programme, and the airfare and hotel room rates at the time of confirmation.

### **Advice sought**

14. Members are invited to advise: (a) whether the Panel should conduct a visit to Singapore as proposed from 20 to 23 March 2016; if yes, whether (b) the visit should be open to non-Panel Members, and (c) whether officials from the relevant bureau/department should be invited to join the visit to facilitate Members' understanding of the relevant technologies and the applicability of Singapore's experience to Hong Kong.

15. Subject to members' support for the Panel to conduct the proposed duty visit with the objectives set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above, the Secretariat will work out the details and make arrangements for the proposed duty visit. Members are also invited to note that the endorsement of the House Committee will have to be sought on the proposed duty visit.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
18 November 2015

**Panel on Development**  
**Proposed overseas duty visit to Singapore**  
**From 20 (Sunday) to 23 (Wednesday) March 2016**

**Tentative visit programme<sup>#</sup>**

Date	Time	Programme
20 March (Sunday)	PM	Arrival in Singapore
21 March (Monday)	AM	Meetings with the following organizations -- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore</li> <li>● The Public Utilities Board</li> <li>● The National Environment Agency</li> <li>● The relevant committee(s) in the Singapore Parliament tasked to oversee matters related to water supply and quality</li> </ul>
	PM	
22 March (Tuesday)	AM	
	PM	
23 March (Wednesday)	AM	(Departing from Singapore for Hong Kong on the afternoon/evening of 23 March)
	PM	

# A detailed visit programme will be drawn up with the assistance of the Consulate-General of the Republic of Singapore in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office in Singapore, subject to the confirmation of the receiving organizations.

Panel on Development

Proposed overseas duty visit to Singapore  
From 20 (Sunday) to 23 (Wednesday) March 2016

Tentative estimate of expenditure

Routing of visit: Hong Kong / Singapore / Hong Kong

Breakdown of estimated expenses

Item	Estimated expenses (per person) HK\$
1. Return air passage  Hong Kong / Singapore / Hong Kong	(Economy Class)  2,800 <sup>(Note 1)</sup>
2. Hotel accommodation <i>(60% of the subsistence allowance<sup>(Note 2)</sup>)</i>  Singapore (3 nights) (20 to 22 March 2016)	1,918 x 3 = 5,754
3. Meals and sundries <i>(35% of the subsistence allowance<sup>(Notes 2 and 3)</sup>)</i>	4,474
4. Travel insurance	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,228</b>

NOTES:

1. Airfare quotation obtained in November 2015. Price inclusive of taxes and surcharges.
2. Subsistence allowance for Singapore: SGD578 per night (Exchange rate as at November 2015: SGD1 = HK\$5.53)

3. As in-town transport will be provided by the Secretariat, the subsistence allowance payable is reduced by 5%. Other expenditures including hospitality, interpretation services and souvenirs will be charged against other votes of the Secretariat.
4. The actual expenditure will vary subject to the final visit programme, and the airfare and hotel room rates at the time of confirmation.