

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2061/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration and cleared
by the Chairman)

Ref: CB1/PL/ES/1

Legislative Council
Panel on Economic Services

Minutes of special meeting held on
Monday, 19 June 2000, at 2:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon HUI Cheung-ching
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon FUNG Chi-kin

Members absent : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, JP (Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok
Hon Christine LOH
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP

**Public officers
Attending**

: For Agenda Item I

Economic Services Bureau

Ms Maria KWAN, JP
Acting Secretary for Economic Services

Mr Arthur HO
Deputy Secretary for Economic Services (2)

Mr Howard LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services (B)

Miss Rachel CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services (C)

Civil Aviation Department

Mr H C KWAN
Acting Deputy Director of Civil Aviation

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

Mr Roger LAI
Deputy Director (Regulatory Services)/EMSD

Hong Kong Observatory

Mr K H YEUNG
Assistant Director (Development, Research &
Administration)

For Agenda Item II

Economic Services Bureau

Ms Maria KWAN, JP
Acting Secretary for Economic Services

Miss Rachel CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services (C)

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

Mr Roger LAI
Deputy Director (Regulatory Services)/EMSD

For Agenda Item III

Economic Services Bureau

Ms Maria KWAN, JP
Acting Secretary for Economic Services

Miss Rachel CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services (C)

Post Office

Mr P C LUK, JP
Postmaster General

Mr A CHIANG, JP
Deputy Postmaster General

Mr K L TSANG
Assistant Postmaster General (Corporate Development)

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

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I Revision of Government Fees and Charges

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1780/99-00(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

As the Chairman could not attend the meeting, the Deputy Chairman took over the chair.

2. Members noted the proposals to revise the fees and charges relating to certain services provided by the Civil Aviation Department (CAD), the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD). The Administration was of the view that these proposals did not directly affect people's livelihood or general business activities.

3. Considering that fee revision proposals from the Government would invariably have an impact on people's livelihood by encouraging other public utilities to increase

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their charges, Mr LAU Chin-shek stated his reservation about all the items of fee revision proposed at this time when the general public had yet to benefit from the recovery of Hong Kong's economy.

En-route navigation charges and helicopter movement fees

4. Referring to the different practices of charging the same fee for 737-300 and 747-400 aircraft as adopted in Hong Kong or different rates for large and small aircraft as adopted in Australia, Thailand and India, Mr Howard YOUNG asked whether there was any guideline or standard practice recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization or International Air Transport Association (IATA). In reply, the Acting Deputy Director of Civil Aviation (DD/CA (Atg.)) said that he was not aware of any guideline or recommended standard practice in this regard. However, the uniform charges were levied by CAD on the basis that the same service was provided to large and small aircraft alike.

5. Mr YOUNG further asked about the objective of CAD's forthcoming discussion with the IATA Hong Kong User Charges Board (IATA HKUCB). DD/CA (Atg.) replied that during the discussions to be held in late July/early August, CAD would give more detailed explanations to the IATA HKUCB on the upward revision of charges. The IATA HKUCB was already aware of the fact that the current charges could not even recover the cost of providing such services and it had been notified of the proposed increase by CAD during previous consultation with the Board. Upon enquiry by the Deputy Chairman, DD/CA (Atg.) also confirmed that no permission was required from the IATA HKUCB to effect the proposed increase.

Sale of daily weather charts

6. The Acting Secretary for Economic Services (SES (Atg.)) invited members to note that notwithstanding the upward revision of subscription charges as proposed, the users could still have a choice of obtaining such information free-of-charge from the HKO's internet web-site.

II Approval of Domestic Gas Appliances

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1818/99-00(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

7. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services (C) (PAS for ES(C)) briefed members on the Administration's plan to require all new domestic gas appliances manufactured or imported for use in Hong Kong to be approved by the Gas Authority and to display an approved mark. Details of the plan were set out in the paper provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)1810/99-00(01)).

8. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the application of the proposed legislative

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amendments on portable cassette cookers and older types of gas appliances without the flame failure protection device. In reply, the Deputy Director (Regulatory Services)/EMSD (DD(RS)/EMSD) said that the primary objective of the proposed amendments was to make it mandatory for all new domestic gas appliances to be approved by the Gas Authority in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the "Approval of Domestic Gas Appliances" code of practice (GU05) so as to enhance safety protection for the public in line with established international standards. The code of practice also contained safety requirements geared to local circumstances, such as the flame failure protection device. Installation of portable cassette cookers which were free-standing appliances fuelled by disposable gas containers would not be regulated by the proposed approval scheme.

9. Sharing the Deputy Chairman's concern about the safety requirements of portable cassette cookers and other cooking facilities used in catering establishments, Mr LAU Chin-shek considered that the Administration should further review whether public safety was adequately protected taking into account the increasing use of such appliances both in domestic premises and restaurants for hot pots. In reply, PAS for ES(C) said that EMSD would conduct inspections to ensure that the cooking facilities used in catering establishments were properly installed and connected. In this respect, Mr LAU suggested that inspection work should be completed before the winter season. In view of members' concern, SES (Atg.) undertook to examine the suggestions and views expressed by members and provide further information to the Panel after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration subsequently advised vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1952/99-00(01) that the proposed approval scheme for domestic gas appliances would apply to all gas appliances which were designed, or intended, to be used primarily in domestic premises, irrespective of whether it was so used. These would include cooking appliances fuelled by disposable gas containers (i.e. portable cassette cookers) but the proposed requirement for installation by registered installers would not be applicable to this category of free-standing appliances. As regards gas cooking appliances used only in catering establishments, their safe installation and use were already regulated by the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations and two codes of practice covering LPG and Towngas installations for catering purposes in commercial premises).

10. As a follow-up question, Mr LAU asked how the current safety and quality standards in Hong Kong compared with established international standards and national standards adopted by neighbouring countries. In respond, SES (Atg.) drew members' attention to paragraphs 2 and 3 of the paper which stated that the GU05 code of practice was drawn up with reference to similar practices in other countries like Australia, Japan, Italy etc.

11. Concerning about the implication of the proposal on the industry, Mr HUI Cheung-ching enquired about the average processing time required for approval by the

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Gas Authority. DD(RS)/EMSD replied that on average, approval would be given within two to three months. Experience had also shown that much time was taken for the Hong Kong supplier to furnish all the relevant supporting documents to the Gas Authority. Responding to a further question from Mr HUI, DD(RS)/EMSD advised that no complaint had been received so far in relation to the operation of the voluntary approval scheme. In fact, enquiries from manufacturers and importers showed that they would like to see the early implementation of the mandatory scheme so that the approved mark could be displayed on the appliances.

III Introduction of Postcode System in Hong Kong

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1885/99-00(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

12. The Postmaster General (PMG) invited members' views on the introduction of a postcode system in Hong Kong, details of which were set out in the paper provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)1885/99-00(01)).

13. Mr SIN Chung-kai welcomed the proposal as it would bring about enormous benefits to the Hong Kong society. He remarked that apart from enhancing the efficiency of postal operation, postcode could be a useful tool for business organizations in planning their commercial activities such as direct marketing. In view of the widespread social and economic implications involved, Mr SIN urged the Administration to further develop its thinking on the postcode system by taking into account the views of the business community and the general public. His support was shared by Mr David CHU who suggested that the assignment of postcodes should be based on smaller geographical units to accommodate future developments.

14. While thanking members for their views, PMG advised that the preliminary thinking of the Post Office (PO) was to start assigning postcodes to all addresses in Hong Kong in around 2003. After a familiarization period of one or two years, the postcode system would formally be implemented in around 2005 with the introduction of a new mechanized letter sorting system. In designing the postcodes, PO would take into account the user requirements and the views of the business community and make reference to overseas experience. On the assignment of postcodes, PMG explained that under the preliminary proposal, postcodes would be assigned according to delivery points served by individual delivery postmen so as to achieve maximum efficiency for automation sorting process. For example, if a building was divided into ten delivery points, each delivery point would be assigned a unique postcode.

15. As to whether the use of postcode by the general public should be made mandatory, Mr SIN Chung-kai opined that in formulating the Government's policy, consideration should be given to the fact that the success of the system would depend on how common its use was in the society and there might be grounds for mandatory adoption. In response, SES (Atg.) said that the Administration fully understood that general acceptability among businesses and the general public would ensure maximum

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benefits. However, in view of overseas experience, the Administration was more inclined towards the voluntary adoption of postcodes. In this connection, the Deputy Chairman opined that he did not support the mandatory adoption of postcodes and he suggested that one incentive for encouraging the use of postcodes among the general public might be a faster delivery of letters.

16. Responding to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about the financial implication of the proposal, SES (Atg.) advised that at this preliminary stage, the funding arrangement had yet to be decided.

17. Summing up the discussion, the Deputy Chairman said that the proposal was generally supported by members and he requested the Administration to provide further details to the Panel in due course.

IV Any other business

18. Noting that this was the last meeting held by the Panel during the current term of the Legislative Council, the Deputy Chairman thanked members and the Administration for their support and contribution to the work of the Panel.

19. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 3:17 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
19 September 2000