

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1384/99-00

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/PL/PLW/1

LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 24 February 2000, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon HO Sai-chu, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Non-Panel member attending : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP

Members absent : Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP

Public officers attending : **For item IV**

Mr TAM Wing-pong
Deputy Director of Beijing office

Mr C K HUI
Chief Property Services Manager 3
Property Services Branch
Architectural Services Department

Mrs M BROWN
Deputy Government Property Administrator
Government Property Agency

Item V

Mr T Y CHEUNG
Project Manager/Hong Kong Island and
Islands, Territory Development Department

Mr Wilson FUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Lands (Planning)

Ms Kitty CHOI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Mr H H YEUNG
Chief Engineer / Hong Kong
Territory Development Department

Mr C W KWAN
Chief Engineer, Urban Regional Office
(Hong Kong), Transport Department

Mr David ENGLISH
Deputy Project Manager
Major Works Project Management Office
Highways Department

Mr Dickson LO
Director of Maunsell Consultants Asia Ltd.

Mr K K LING
District Planning Officer / Hong Kong
Planning Department

Mr C H CHEUNG
Senior Engineer
Major Works Project Management Office
Highways Department

Item VI

Mr W S CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Works (Works Policy)

Mr K W MAK
Assistant Secretary for Works (Works Policy)

Mr R K S CHAN, JP
Head of Geotechnical Engineering Office
Civil Engineering Department

Mr M C TANG
Assistant Director (Geotechnical)/
Landslip Preventive Measures
Civil Engineering Department

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG, Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Miss Irene MAN, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)9

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I Confirmation of minutes of meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)765, 951 and 1026/99-00)

The minutes of the meetings held on 28 October and 9 December 1999 and the minutes of the joint meeting with Environmental Affairs Panel held on 9 December 1999 were confirmed.

II Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)991/99-00(01) and (02))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting of the Panel to be held on 9 March 2000 at 10:45am -

- (a) Open competition for the development of West Kowloon Reclamation; and
- (b) Land sale and disposal programme for the year 2000-2001 and onwards.

3. Members noted the list of follow-up actions arising from discussions at Panel meetings.

III Information papers issued since last meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)792 and 913/99-00)

4. Members noted the Administration's information papers on the Buildings (Amendment) Bill 2000 and the "Tendering System for Public Works Contracts".

IV Proposal to purchase permanent office accommodation for the Beijing Office
(LC Paper No. CB(1)991/99-00(03))

5. The Chairman explained to members the reasons for discussing the proposal at this Panel. He said that the discussion item was not within the terms of reference of the Panel as it had no direct relationship with issues on planning, lands or works. In the absence of a corresponding Panel for the Beijing Office and having considered the nature of the subject matter, the Administration requested that this Panel discussed the proposal. The Chairman stressed that the taking up of the matter by this Panel did not mean that affairs relating to the Beijing Office had been included into its terms of reference.

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Director of Beijing Office (DD/BO) said that noting the public concern about the proposal to purchase permanent office accommodation for the Beijing Office, the Administration considered it appropriate to seek members' views before submitting a funding application to the Finance Committee (FC) for consideration. Should members have strong reservation about the proposal, the Administration might not proceed with the purchase for the time being, which would not incur any financial loss to the Government as the Beijing Office had not commenced formal negotiation with the landlord.

7. Explaining the justifications for the proposed purchase, DD/BO said that it was in line with the established practice of accommodating overseas Government offices in owned premises as far as possible. Stand-alone office premises were preferable to an office within a multi-storey building as Government, being the owner, would have independent management. They were also better from the security point of view. Most provincial representative offices in Beijing were housed in owned stand-alone premises. The major reason for the proposed purchase, however, was that the existing facilities of the Beijing Office were found to be inadequate to meet operational needs. The current Beijing Office which was in a multi-storey building had 1,690 square metres. The reception room was small and there was no dining hall. At present, when it was considered necessary to host working lunches or dinners, the Beijing Office had no choice but to go to restaurants and hotels. This arrangement was not satisfactory, economical or convenient. If the Beijing Office had its own dining hall, such lunches and dinners could be held in-house with outside catering. Based on the existing operational requirement of the Beijing Office, it would need 2,218 square metres. The increase in floor area was due mainly to the need to provide for a reception room of about 250 square metres, a dining hall of about 100 square metres and a store room of about 200 square metres. The selling price of the proposed premises was around HK\$22,700 per square metre which was within the current price range of HK\$18,000 to HK\$25,000 per square metre for prime office premises in

multi-storey buildings in the city centre of Beijing. The proposed site could be developed up to 2,750 square metres. Although it would exceed the present need of the Beijing Office, the Administration considered that it made economic sense to develop the site up to the maximum permissible scale to cater for future expansion.

8. DD/BO said that the Administration noted the public concern about the purchase of a quadrangle house as an office. Quadrangle house was a unique architectural feature of Beijing. Indeed, many overseas Economic and Trade Offices of Hong Kong such as those in Geneva and London also conformed to the local architectural styles. Potential sites which had been considered suitable for use as a permanent accommodation for the Beijing Office were all subject to planning approval of development as quadrangle houses. DD/BO stressed that a quadrangle house was not necessarily sumptuous and luxurious as perceived by the public. While the external decorations of a quadrangle house would have to comply with the local stipulated criteria, the internal fitting-out could vary. The Beijing Office would follow the Hong Kong Government's established guidelines on internal fitting-out for office accommodation.

9. Miss Emily LAU said that members of the public were concerned about the cost of the proposed purchase and the need for purchasing a quadrangle house with carved peacocks and dragons as an office. Their concern was understandable as they did not see what had been achieved by the Beijing Office since its establishment. In her view, the selling price of the site was on the high side. She also noted with concern that the proposed premises would not be fully utilized in the coming years. In this connection, she sought information on the proposed schedule of accommodation of the permanent office.

10. In response, DD/BO said that quadrangle houses were used mainly for residential purpose in the past. However, in recent years, quadrangle houses were used for commercial purpose as well. He stressed that the exterior of the quadrangle house had to comply with the architectural design set by the local authorities but the internal fitting-out would be in accordance with the operational requirements of the Beijing Office. The landlord of the site in question would be asked to tailor the design of the quadrangle house to the specifications and requirements of the Beijing Office. He assured members that the area entitlement of the Beijing Office would follow the established guideline. The area entitlement of certain senior staff of the Beijing Office would exceed the normal standard by 5% because they received visitors frequently. (*Post-meeting note: the Administration clarified that the correct figure should be 20%*). When the Administration leased the current Beijing Office in 1998, it had stated clearly that it would be a temporary office. After operation for more than a year, the Beijing Office was in a better position to identify the facilities required for proper discharge of its responsibilities. For instance, the current reception room of the Beijing Office was found to be too

small as it could house only 10 people but it was not uncommon to have more than eight to nine visitors at one time.

11. Miss Emily LAU sought further information on the criteria for extra area entitlement and the frequency of having to work beyond office hours at the Beijing Office. In response, DD/BO said that the extra 5% area entitlement was a standard provision for directorate staff in overseas offices as they had visitors frequently. (*Post-meeting note: the Administration clarified that the correct figure should be 20%*). There were numerous occasions on which the staff of the Beijing Office had to work outside office hours, for example during the official visits of senior Hong Kong officers including the Chief Executive and the organization of promotional activities at weekends. Although the staff could have access to the building where the Beijing Office was located outside office hours, the working environment was unsatisfactory as the air-conditioning or the heating system would not be turned on by the building management. In response to Miss Emily LAU, DD/BO said that the Director of the Beijing Office and himself did not intend to live in the quadrangle house.

12. The Chairman enquired about the feasibility of designing a meeting-cum-dining room as was the case of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London, DD/BO explained that as a customary practice, the venues for receiving guests and for holding conference were different in Beijing. Seldom would there be a conference table in the reception room which was normally furnished with sofas. In response to Miss Emily LAU, the Administration agreed to provide the estimated usage rate of the proposed dining hall when the funding application was submitted to FC.

Admin.

13. Dr TANG Siu-tong enquired about the estimated time when the spaces of the proposed permanent office accommodation would be fully utilized and whether there would be sufficient parking spaces at the site. DD/BO said that in accordance with the established guideline, sufficient spaces should be reserved for an increase of 25% of the existing establishment of the office concerned when purchasing permanent premises for office accommodation. (*Post-meeting note: the Administration clarified that the correct figure should be 20%*). Allowing for this 25% increase, the proposed office accommodation for the Beijing Office would exceed the area entitlement by 88 square metres. (*Post-meeting note: the Administration clarified that the correct figure should be 20%*). The Administration could not say for certainty at this stage when the office spaces would be fully utilized. In the Administration's view, if it was considered appropriate to have an office of a smaller size in future, the office premises could be sold. Given the limited supply of similar property in Beijing, he believed that the value of the proposed office premises would rise in the course of time and would not incur loss to the Government. He also agreed with members that sufficient carpark facilities should be provided at the proposed site.

14. Noting that the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London

rented part of its premises to other Hong Kong organizations, the Chairman enquired whether the Beijing Office would do the same in view of the surplus spaces in the permanent office accommodation. DD/BO advised that two organizations had been considered for such purpose, namely the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Hong Kong Tourist Association. However, the former had already purchased its own premises, whereas the latter preferred its office locate in commercial areas. As the nature of work of the Beijing Office was different from that of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas, it did not intend to lease out part of its premises to non-Government organizations. At members' request, DD/BO undertook to provide the present and the proposed schedules of accommodation of the Beijing Office as well as those of the overseas Economic and Trade Offices.

Admin.

15. Mr HO Sai-chu said that he had visited the Beijing Office and considered the current reception room too small. The role played by the Beijing Office in establishing a good relationship between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) and the Central Government as well as the provincial governments was important. A sufficiently large and presentable permanent office accommodation was necessary.

16. While agreeing that the local culture had to be respected, Mr James TO enquired whether the present Beijing Office adequately met Hong Kong's presentational or representational needs and whether a quadrangle-style office would be considered too extravagant by other provinces. DD/BO said that the present Beijing Office was by no means the worst in presentation among the various provincial offices in Beijing in terms of office accommodation. However, since the main function of Beijing Office was liaison, a reasonably decent office would be conducive to the discharge of its functions. Besides, provincial governments had high expectation of the Beijing Office given Hong Kong's economic development. Nevertheless, image was not the most important factor for the purchase proposal. DD/BO further advised that as far as he was aware, most of the provincial governments had office accommodation in owned premises in Beijing, although it was not appropriate to compare the offices of other provinces with that of Hong Kong since most of the provincial government office premises normally also served as guest houses for their visiting officials. There were at least four provincial governments which had quadrangle houses as their office accommodation. The Beijing Office of Shanghai was one example. At the request of Mr TO, the Administration agreed to list out provinces which had quadrangle-style offices in Beijing.

Admin.

17. Mr LEE Wing-tat queried whether it would be financially beneficial to purchase instead of renting an office accommodation in Beijing. DD/BO said that an annual rental of RMB4.5 million including management fee and carpark charges was payable for the current office. Deducting the additional recurrent expenditure of about HK\$1.3 million arising from the permanent

office accommodation, there would be a net annual saving of HK\$2.5 million. The Deputy Government Property Administrator (DGPA) said that the payback period for the current purchase proposal was 22 years. (*Post-meeting note: the Administration clarified that the correct figure should be 17 years.*)

Admin.

18. Mr HO Sai-chu said that he considered the proposed purchase price reasonable. In assessing the merits of the proposed purchase in financial term, the anticipated rise in rental for office premises in Beijing should be considered. Cost could also be saved if the Beijing Office could serve guests at its own dining hall by ordering outside catering. At members' request, DGPA undertook to provide the amortization details of the purchase in comparison with the cost for leasing accommodation.

19. Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that the general public could not see for themselves the work done by the Beijing Office so far to justify the purchase of a larger office. He quoted for example that not much assistance had been provided to Hong Kong residents detained in the Mainland. DD/BO advised that when the Beijing Office was established in 1998, it did not intend to handle individual cases. It had begun to take up individual cases in the second half year of its operation without additional resource. A total of 107 cases had been received from March 1999 to January 2000. 46 of these cases had been closed and most of the remaining 61 cases were received within the past three months. He pointed out that the closed cases might not necessarily have been resolved to the satisfaction of the persons concerned. The Beijing Office had to respect the mainland laws and rules in dealing with detention cases but would offer all possible assistance. In two cases, the Beijing Office had written to the authority concerned when the Hong Kong residents concerned had been detained for more than 18 months without a court hearing and progress was seen within four weeks from the date of the letter. The Beijing Office had also assisted in arranging family visits and medical check-ups for Hong Kong detainees in the Mainland.

20. In response to Mr HO Sai-chu's comment on the need to broaden the scope of work of the Beijing Office, DD/BO said that the main function of the Beijing Office was to serve as a bridge between the HKSARG and the Central Government as well as the provincial governments which would be conducive to the smooth implementation of the "one-country-two-systems". The work of the Beijing Office might not be obvious to the public in the first few months following its establishment as it took time to establish contact with the local authorities. Its work had been running smoothly since the last quarter of 1999. It had assisted individual government departments of Hong Kong to liaise with their Mainland counterparts and expedited the resolution of problems. It had also assisted in disseminating information concerning the Mainland development plans to Hong Kong businessmen to facilitate them to grasp investment opportunities.

21. DD/BO sought members' view on the need to submit the funding

proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) on 12 April 2000. He said that if the funding proposal could be submitted to FC direct on 28 April 2000, the Administration would have more time to negotiate with the developer concerned and to finalize the details. DD/BO informed that the developer of the concerned site had agreed to extend the deadline for negotiating the purchase which should expire by the end of March 2000 originally. In any case, the construction works for the office premises would need to be completed before November 2000 because works could not go on in winter in Beijing.

22. Both the Chairman and Mr James TO were of the view that the funding application could be submitted to FC direct. Nevertheless, the Chairman said that the decision should be left to the Administration.

**V Wan Chai Development Phase II Comprehensive Feasibility Study
- Trunk Road and Waterfront Development Proposals**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)991/99-00(04))

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Planning and Lands (Planning) (PAS/PL) briefed members on the details of the of Trunk Road options and their associated conceptual land use proposals for Wan Chai Development Phase II. He said that in conducting the WDII Comprehensive Feasibility Study (the Study), the Administration had given regard to members' views that the extent of reclamation should be minimized and that the reclaimed land should not be used for property development. In the initial stage of the Study, eight Trunk Road alignment options had been generated and among them three options had been selected for further evaluation. A public consultation forum was held on 1 February 2000 to explain the findings of the Study to interested persons.

24. The Project Manager/Hong Kong Island and Islands, Territory Development Department (PM/TDD) then explained the shortlisted Trunk Road Options and their associated land use proposals with the aid of power point and highlighted the reasons for not shortlisting the Tunnel Options for further evaluation.

(Post-meeting note: A copy of the presentation printouts was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)991/99-00.)

Traffic impact

25. Given the limited traffic capacity near the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC), Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed concern about the traffic impact of Options A, D and G. The Chief Engineer, Urban Regional Office (HK), Transport Department (CE/TD) said that there were not much differences among Options A, D and G in terms of traffic connectivity and in

providing relief to the existing road networks. The Tunnel Options, however, would be much less effective in these respects as there would not be sufficient traffic connectivity to relieve congestion along Gloucester Road and Victoria Park Road. The Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (PAS for T) supplemented that the Central and Wan Chai Bypass (CWB) was originally planned to be a dual two-lane carriageway. A recent review on traffic flow forecasts showed that CWB would be saturated in less than six years after its completion in 2010/2011 and serious traffic congestion would occur between 2021 and 2026. Based on the findings of a preliminary study conducted by the Transport Department and the Highways Department, it was considered feasible to expand CWB into a dual three-lane carriageway under Options A, D or G. The consultant of the project also confirmed that such a change would not affect Central Reclamation Phase III, nor would it incur additional reclamation. The Administration was now actively considering this proposal and would report to PWSC should there be a change to the CWB project.

26. Noting the proposed construction of a helipad near HKCEC, Ir Dr Raymond HO was concerned whether it would affect the site as a tourist attraction. PM/TDD advised that according to the information provided by the Government Flying Service, the estimated daily usage of the helipad, which was intended for emergency and security uses only, would not exceed three times. The District Planning Officer/Hong Kong, Planning Department (DPO/HK) added that apart from this proposed helipad, there was another one at the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital in Chai Wan for medical purpose.

Extent of reclamation

27. Miss Emily LAU stressed public concern about the extent of reclamation which had been expressed at the public forum. She reiterated her position that reclamation of the Victoria Harbour should be kept to the minimum and that reclamation should only proceed for the purpose of providing land for necessary facilities, such as roads. She expressed objection to reclaiming the Victoria Harbour for the development of the proposed island park and other tourist facilities. She urged the Administration to respect the spirit of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531). The Chairman shared Miss LAU's views and also queried the need for the island park under Option A.

28. In reply, PAS/PL said that at the public forum, there was general support for Option A. Views were expressed on three major areas, namely the reasons for not adopting the tunnel options, the need for a large island park, and the width of the waterfront promenade. On the proposal to construct an island park, he referred members to Figure 7 of Annex B to the information paper and explained that under Option A, it was necessary to re-provision a marina for the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club (RHKYC) and construct a breakwater to ensure adequate wave protection. In order to reduce the impact on the surrounding

water quality, the breakwater had to be T-shaped. The shape of the breakwater dictated the minimal area for reclamation. To utilize the reclaimed area around the breakwater in the best way, the consultant had suggested building an island park. The size of the proposed island park might be reduced but there was a limit technically. Moreover, too small an island park would defeat its intended purpose for enjoyment of the public. Divided views had been received on the width of the waterfront promenade and the Administration would consider them. Views had also been expressed on land uses at the public forum. Since the proposed land uses would be subject to change, the Administration did not consider it fruitful to discuss them in detail at the present stage.

29. The Chairman doubted the need for a T-shaped breakwater. Mr Dickson LO, Director of Maunsell Consultants Asia Ltd advised that the existing breakwater located in the east of the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter was to protect the Typhoon Shelter and the vessels at the Public Cargo Working Area from north-east monsoon. Under Option A, a shorter breakwater would be built north to the existing one forming a T-shape to protect the marina. An extension of the existing breakwater to the west would not be able to provide sufficient water area to accommodate the existing vessels moored at the Typhoon Shelter. The present water area of Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter was 18.5 hectares and would be reduced to 14 hectares under Option A. PAS/PL said that in view of members' concern, the Administration would further consider the breakwater.

Admin.

30. Mr WONG Yung-kan enquired about the type and the number of vessels which would likely moor at the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter. In response, Mr Dickson LO said that three types of vessels currently used the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter, namely yachts of RHKYC, yachts leasing mooring spaces from the Marine Department (MD) and residential boats. As residential boats would be relocated elsewhere and very few fishing boats presently use the Typhoon Shelter, 14 hectares of water area should be sufficient to accommodate all the existing vessels moored at the Typhoon Shelter.

31. Responding to the Chairman's enquiry about the reprovisioning of RHKYC, PAS/PL clarified that RHKYC would remain where it was and only the marina would be relocated. The Chief Engineer/Hong Kong/Territory Development Department (CE/TDD) supplemented that a new but smaller marina would be built north to RHKYC since the trunk road under Option A would pass through the existing marina. Moreover, wave protection facilities would be constructed in the north-east of RHKYC.

Pedestrian access

32. Ir Dr Raymond HO queried if there would be adequate pedestrian access to the waterfront promenade. His concern was shared by the Chairman

who said that the construction of the new trunk road would increase the already long distance between the heart of the Wanchai area and the waterfront facilities. He considered it important to have sufficient pedestrian access and traffic connections including parking spaces to the waterfront. In reply, PM/TDD said that pedestrians could have altogether five ways of access to the waterfront from the existing Hing Fat Street to the Victoria Park, the World Trade Centre, the Wan Chai Stadium and the bus terminal outside HKCEC.

33. Noting that the approach road to the entrance of the tunnel under Option A was wider than other sections of the road, the Chairman queried whether this was to accommodate toll plazas. Mr Dickson LO explained that this was to provide emergency pass for vehicles which did not comply with the conditions for use of the tunnel, such as vehicles exceeding the permitted height. This was a standard design for tunnels including the Cross Harbour Tunnel. PAS for T confirmed that the proposed trunk road would not be a toll road.

34. Mr HO Sai-chu and Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed support for Trunk Road Option A. Miss Emily LAU said that she supported the alignment of the Trunk Road under Option A but did not agree to the associated land uses. PAS/PL assured that Trunk Road Option A concerned alignment only. The Administration would take about six months to draft a proposed development plan for further consultation and would report to the Panel again in due course. PM/TDD added that environmental impact assessments would be carried out and the impact on water quality would be further examined.

35. Upon request by PAS/PL, the Chairman confirmed that the Panel endorsed Option A as a basis for the Administration to continue with the rest of the WDII Study.

VI Slope safety
(LC Paper No. CB(1)733/99-00)

36. Referring to paragraph 23 of the information paper, Mr James TO sought clarification on whether the 200 slopes affecting public housing estates had been given priority of investigation and improvement works among the 37,000 government slopes. The Deputy Secretary for Works (Works Policy) (DS for W) advised that since the Shek Kip Mei landslide incident in August 1999, the Housing Department and the Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO) had identified slopes that required improvement works under the Landslip Preventive Measures (LPM) Programme and the 200 slopes had been given priority among the shortlisted slopes. It was expected that all investigation and improvements works for these slopes would be completed by September 2001.

37. Since the maintenance of the 37,000 government slopes would be carried out by seven slope maintenance departments, Mr James TO was

concerned whether these departments would have sufficient resources to do the task, in particular in respect of slopes which had been accorded with top priority. DS for W explained that major stabilization works for government slopes under the LPM Programme would be centrally carried out by GEO. The seven individual departments were responsible for maintenance of slopes assigned to them only. For the 400 slopes on unallocated land adjoining public housing estates, the Housing Department only acted as a maintenance agent for Government, the cost for maintenance works would be borne by Government. GEO would ensure that individual maintenance departments would carry out the investigation and maintenance works which had been accorded with priority. The Head of Geotechnical Engineering Office/Civil Engineering Department (H of GEO) supplemented that under the LPM Programme, GEO aimed to complete safety-screening of about 300 private slopes and large-scale stabilization works of 250 government slopes every year from 2000 to 2010. A total of HK\$925 million for such works had been approved by the Finance Committee for the following financial year. It was expected that the first Engineer Inspection for all government slopes would be completed by maintenance departments by the end of 2002. Substandard slopes requiring large-scale upgrading works would be included in the LPM Programme. In response to Mr James TO, the Administration agreed to provide information which would show the present position and the works done and to be done by GEO and individual maintenance departments in respect of maintenance and upgrading works.

Admin.

38. Mr James TO further enquired about the recent rate of compliance with Dangerous Hillside Orders (DHOs) for private slopes. H of GEO advised that according to the information provided by the Buildings Department (BD), the compliance rate was improving. The non-compliance rate had reduced from 30% to less than 25%. BD was responsible for both issue and enforcement of DHOs while GEO would provide technical assistance to BD for the administration of these orders.

39. In response to Mr HO Sai-chu, H of GEO said that where owners of private slopes fail to comply with DHOs, BD could carry out the repair works and recover from the owners concerned for the costs incurred.

40. Noting the division of responsibilities between BD and GEO, Mr James TO considered it more efficient to have one single department, such as GEO, to take up all matters related to slopes. DS for W advised that GEO was responsible for safety-screening of slopes while BD was conferred with power under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) to issue DHOs to owners of private slopes where there was prima facie evidence of danger.

41. Noting that the maintenance responsibility had been identified for 54,000 man-made slopes, Dr TANG Siu-tong enquired whether these slopes had been categorized according to their level of risk and whether the identification work had included inspection of the flow of natural underground

water which might affect the stability of adjacent slopes. H of GEO explained that the studies of cataloguing man-made slopes and of identifying their maintenance responsibility had been completed by the end of 1999 and both the slope catalogue and the maintenance responsibility register had been released to the public. Of the 54,000 man-made slopes, 37,000 were government slopes and had been assigned to seven individual government departments for maintenance. In the process of compiling the slope catalogue, initial assessment of stability and consequences of landslides had been done and the slopes were ranked accordingly. The individual maintenance departments prioritized their maintenance works with reference to the ranking. H of GEO also advised that the identification work did not include inspection of buried water-carrying services which might affect the stability of slopes. Seepages on the slopes were however recorded.

42. Given that about 25% of private slopes with DHOs were left unattended, Ir Dr Raymond HO enquired about the contemplation or otherwise of the introduction of a mandatory slope maintenance scheme. In reply, H of GEO said that the Administration would continue to encourage owners of private slopes to maintain their slopes through education. While the Administration did not rule out the possibility of introducing a mandatory slope maintenance scheme through legislation, it would only adopt such an approach as a last resort. DS for W supplemented that the Community Advisory Service provided by GEO had conducted five meet-the-public sessions in 1999 with the purpose of enhancing the awareness of owners on slope maintenance and assisting them in discharging the DHOs.

43. As regards the new Landslip Warning criteria, H of GEO said that they were found to be effective in predicting the possibility of landslides during rainstorms. These criteria included inter alia the distribution of rainfall in different regions and the forecast rainfall in the coming few hours. Based on the past experience, most landslides occurred in man-made slopes, slopes adjacent to major highways and in developed areas. Therefore, only if heavy rain was expected to fall in those areas would a Landslip Warning be hoisted. However, the Warning itself was not a landslip preventive measure.

44. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:55 p.m.