

**LegCo Members' meeting with
Island District Council Members
on 20 February 2001**

(I) Issues raised by members of Island District Council (IsDC) at the meeting

- (a) In the past, the procedures were simple when villagers applied to the Lands Department (LD) for building village houses. However, from 2000 onwards, villagers were required to apply to other government departments including the Geotechnical Engineering Office and the Architectural Services Department. The staff concerned would then assess whether the proposed village houses would meet the requirements, and the procedures were complicated.
- (b) When submitting applications to LD, villagers did not know when the Department would approve their applications. IsDC members therefore requested that LD should issue to the applicants the work schedules for the construction of village houses, and state when the Department would inform the applicants of the necessary alterations to the proposed village houses and when the staff concerned would reply.
- (c) IsDC members pointed out that the expenses for building village houses were 20% to 30% higher than before. The construction of village houses which involved procedures related to surrender and regrant of lands would take LD one to two years to process. Villagers were also required to pay an administration fee of as high as \$40,000 to \$50,000 and complete the entire project in three years. Even if the construction works were complicated and entailed maintenance of retaining walls near the proposed village houses or the construction of houses on slopes, these were still required to be completed within three years. IsDC members criticized the inflexible practices of LD. They alleged that having asked villagers questions on the proposed village houses, the LD staff concerned would often pose the same or new questions upon receipt of replies from villagers. The application process was thus time-consuming and the construction plan delayed.

(II) LegCo Members' response at the meeting

- (a) LegCo Members who received IsDC members said that according to the stipulation of LD, small house applications were usually required to be listed for five to 10 years before being vetted by the staff of LD. The application would be vetted and approved within 170 days only if the case was straightforward. Regarding LD posing different questions to applicants at different times, the Secretary for Planning and Lands had been informed of this. The main reason for requiring villagers to submit information on construction of village houses to relevant departments was to ensure that the proposed village houses would meet the construction requirements.
- (b) LegCo members who received the IsDC members considered that LD should exercise flexibility for cases where the works must take more than three years, including those where retaining walls must be built. As for the administration fee of \$40,000 to \$50,000 involved in the construction works, Heung Yee Kuk had already expressed the concerns to LegCo Members. The LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works would follow up this matter after the LegCo Panel on Financial Affairs had examined the Government's principles on setting fees.
- (c) LegCo members who received IsDC members informed that the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works had already requested the Administration to provide LegCo Members with details in relation to the costs of issuing licences for small houses. Upon receipt of details on the relevant costs by the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works, the information would be forwarded to IsDC for reference.