

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)656/07-08
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

Panel on Home Affairs

**Notes of informal meeting
held on Friday, 13 July 2007, at 9:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP (Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, JP
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Heung-man
- Member attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
- Members absent** : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item II

Home Affairs Bureau

Ms Winnie SO
Principal Assistant Secretary (Culture)1

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

Professor Kelvin THOMPSON
Director

Mr Kenneth IP
Dean of Film and Television

Mr Geoffrey STITT
Head of Post Production

Mr Alex LEE
Lecturer (Television) (Designate)

Ms Winnie SIN
Bursar

Item III

Home Affairs Department

Mr Isaac CHOW Yiu-nam
Deputy Director of Home Affairs (2)

Miss Fiona YUEN Yu-yin
Assistant Director of Home Affairs (4) (Acting)

Miss Joyce KOK Sen-yee
Assistant Director of Home Affairs (4) (Acting)

Item IV

Mr TSANG Tak-sing
Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Carrie YAU TSANG Ka-lai
Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Pamela TAN KAM Mi-wah
Director of Home Affairs

Mr Thomas CHOW Tat-ming
Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Clerk in attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

Staff in attendance : Miss Vivien POON
Council Secretary (2)3

Ms Anna CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2)2

Informal briefing

As a quorum was not present within 15 minutes of the time appointed for the meeting, the Chairman declared that the meeting scheduled for 9:30 am that morning was cancelled. Members agreed that the Panel would proceed to hold an informal meeting. The Chairman reminded members that they were not covered by the privileges and immunity provided under the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance (Cap. 382) in the ensuing discussion. Ms Emily LAU requested to put on record her regret that some members had failed to turn up in time for attending the scheduled meeting.

I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) had provided a paper on "Financial Support to Disabled and Non-disabled Athletes" [LC Paper No. CB(2)2416/06-07(01)] for members' reference.

II. Upgrade of Film/TV Production and Post-production Equipment in the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2308/06-07(01)]

Briefing by the Administration

3. Principal Assistant Secretary (Culture)1 (PAS(C)1) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's proposal to upgrade the existing

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film/television studio and video production/post-production facilities at the School of Film and Television of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) at \$26.882 million over two years from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009. The main purpose of the upgrade was to replace the existing analogue equipment with high definition (HD) digital equipment. She added that, subject to members' views, the Administration intended to seek the approval of the Finance Committee in the beginning of the new legislative session.

4. Director of HKAPA and Dean of Film and Television then briefed members on the background to the proposal and relevant justifications. They explained that, with the rapid digitalisation of production and post-production procedures by all pay TV operators in Hong Kong as well as in the film and video production industry in the past few years, training on the operational procedures and functions of the analogue equipment in the studio of the School of Film and Television had become outdated. They stressed that there was a need to upgrade the existing film/television studio and the video production/post-production facilities in order to ensure their compatibilities with the present day requirements. In addition, the upgrade would help develop the creative potential of digital technologies in Hong Kong.

Discussion

5. The Chairman said that, as this was only an informal meeting, members could not take a decision on whether or not the Panel supported the financial proposal. She said that members' views on the financial proposal would be sought by circulation of papers after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: A circular was issued on the matter on 16 July 2007 and the majority of members responding to the circular signified agreement for the submission of the financial proposal to the Finance Committee for approval.)

6. Referring to paragraphs 2 and 8 of the Administration's paper, Ms Emily LAU asked whether the numbers of student intakes of the School of Film and Television, i.e. an annual intake of 30 students for the Diploma in Digital Film-making and the first year student intake of 28 for the degree programme on Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film and Television, and for other programmes, such as the Master of Fine Arts Programme with a prospective intake of ten students in the 2009-2010 academic year, were too small, and whether these numbers were decided based on assessments of local manpower demands of the relevant industries.

7. Director of HKAPA said that the numbers of student intakes were not sufficient, but there were constraints, e.g. campus space, to the number of student intake. The Academy would train more students through its part-time programmes. Dean of Film and Television explained that traditionally HKAPA conducted its teaching in small-class mode since the emphasis of the

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programmes offered by the Academy was on students' creative skills. PAS(C)1 informed members that the employment rate of graduates by the relevant industry had been very high. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) would liaise with HKAPA on organising more blister programmes to train up students to meet the market demands for local creative talents.

8. Referring to paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper, Ms Emily LAU enquired about the level of school fee for the Master of Fine Arts Programme which would be operated on a self-financing basis and how the level was set. Bursar of HKAPA replied that the central overhead costs of the degree programme would be subsidised by income generated from other self-financed activities of the Academy. She said that the amount of fee for the programme was \$75,000 which would cover only the direct costs.

9. Professor Patrick LAU asked why the film/television studio would stay in the Wanchai campus while the School of Film and Television would be moved to the Bethanie in Pokfulam. Dean of Film and Television explained that, as the film/television studio occupied a large area and its set-up cost was high, it would not be feasible or cost-effective for its removal to the Bethanie as well. However, the video production/post-production facilities of the School at the HKAPA Wanchai campus would be moved to the Bethanie. He added that convenient transportation service between the Bethanie and the Wanchai campus would be provided for students attending studio-based courses. Director of HKAPA added that it was necessary to retain the studio in Wanchai in order to maintain its synergy with other disciplines of the Academy.

10. Miss TAM Heung-man expressed support for the financial proposal. Ms Emily LAU said that the Administration should provide sufficient resources for HKAPA to upgrade its facilities and equipment on a regular basis with a view to providing high standard training for students. She considered that the Administration should make accurate projections of the manpower demands of the television and film industry and provide the required teaching resources for HKAPA to train up adequate students accordingly. She also suggested that HKAPA should provide its assessment to the Administration on whether its student intakes were sufficient to meet the manpower demand of the relevant industries in Hong Kong and what constraints preventing the Academy from admitting more students.

11. PAS(C)1 responded that the Administration had met with HKAPA regularly to discuss the Academy's development needs. According to the Academy, with the opening of new tourist facilities in Macau, there had been an increase in demand for local talents in the field of performing and related technical arts. To solve the space problem, HKAPA was exploring feasible options for expansion and was discussing one of such options with a charitable organisation. Director of HKAPA pointed out that space and availability of resources were the constraints faced by the Academy in exploring possibilities of expansion.

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12. The Chairman was of the view that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of the demand for local talents for the purpose of enhancing the development of creative industries, particularly film industry, and plan for the provision of adequate degree courses for training up the required talents. In this connection, she suggested that the Administration should provide a paper on the matter to the relevant Panel for consideration.

13. The Chairman further said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was supportive of the financial proposal. She suggested that HKAPA should consider making available its relatively outdated video production/post-production facilities for holding interest classes for the participation of amateur learners.

III. Issues relating to implementation of the Building Management (Amendment) Ordinance 2005

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1535/06-07 and CB(2)2308/06-07(02) and publications]

Briefing by the Administration

14. Deputy Director of Home Affairs (2) (DDHA(2)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper. He said that the Administration had conducted intensive training for all the Liaison Officers of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) on the Building Management (Amendment) Ordinance 2007 (Amendment Ordinance) as well as a series of briefings for various professional organisations and government departments concerned in the past few months. To better the understanding of owners' corporations (OCs) and owners' committees about the new requirements, the Administration had lined up some 30 district briefings in July and August 2007. It was also attending meetings of the 18 DCs to brief DC members about the Amendment Ordinance.

15. Assistant Director of Home Affairs (4) (Acting) (AD4(Ag)/AO(4)) supplemented that, apart from conducting a series of briefings, the Administration had published new guidebooks on the Building Management Ordinance (BMO) and the Amendment Ordinance to assist the public to understand the new provisions under the Amendment Ordinance.

Discussion

Publicity arrangements to prepare for the commencement of the Amendment Ordinance

16. Miss TAM Heung-man asked whether the Administration would conduct training courses at a small charge on BMO and the new requirements

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under the Amendment Ordinance. DDHA(2) responded that the Administration had been conducting a series of briefings in the past three months. It had also lined up some 30 district briefings for OCs and owners' committees. He further said that, upon the request of some political parties, the Building Management Liaison Teams (DBMLTs) of the respective districts had provided assistance in organising these briefings for owners. AD4(Ag)/AO(4) said that wide publicity had been launched to inform the public of these briefings. She said that consideration would also be given to conducting training courses on the Amendment Ordinance for property owners. She added that updated schedules of relevant publicity and educational activities had been placed on the website of HAD for the information of the public.

17. Mr James TO considered that the Administration should conduct more briefings in each district. He suggested that the Liaison Officers attending the general meetings of OCs should seize the opportunities to conduct a short briefing on the Amendment Ordinance.

18. DDHA(2) responded that, in organising the briefings in a district, the Administration would keep record of which OCs in the district were absent and would follow up with these OCs to ensure that they would also receive the relevant information and publicity materials. Liaison Officers attending the general meetings of OCs would also brief the owners present on the new provisions under the Amendment Ordinance.

19. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked whether the Administration would evaluate the effectiveness of the publicity arrangements after the arrangements had been implemented for a certain period of time, e.g. six months. Assistant Director of Home Affairs (4) (Acting) (AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM)) replied that DBMLT would follow up on the evaluation. Mr WONG Kwok-hing suggested that a questionnaire should be designed for completion by OCs and owners' associations to assess how well they understood the Amendment Ordinance.

20. Mr WONG Kwok-hing further said that owners and members of a management committee were worried that they might overlook or misunderstand the Amendment Ordinance and inadvertently breach its provisions. He suggested that the Administration should set up telephone hotline service outside office hours, during the first two to three years after the commencement of the Amendment Ordinance, to facilitate enquiries about the statutory requirements under the Amendment Ordinance.

21. AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM) said that Liaison Officers attending owners' meetings would respond to enquiries as appropriate. To facilitate enquiries about the new requirements outside office hours, the contact telephone numbers of DBMLTs had been made available on the website of HAD as well as on the publicity leaflets. The Property Management Advisory Centres operated under the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) also provided free guidance and advice on the Amendment Ordinance. These centres opened until

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8:00 pm. AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM) added that members of the public could also make use of the government central hotline (telephone number 1823) outside office hours.

22. Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that OCs/owners could not obtain timely assistance through the government central hotline as it only provided voice mail recording service and was set up mainly for receiving complaints. He remained of the view that a telephone hotline service which operated outside office hours should be provided at least during the first two to three years after the commencement of the Amendment Ordinance.

23. DDHA(2) said that each district already had its own telephone hotline set up for receiving enquiries about building management, which operated up to 7:00 pm on weekdays. He said that, subject to resources availability, the Administration would strengthen its liaison with OCs in each district with a view to enhancing their understanding of the Amendment Ordinance.

24. Ms Emily LAU asked about the general feedback received during the briefings conducted for OCs/owners and the professional bodies. AD4(Ag)/AO(4) said that response had so far been enthusiastic and each of these briefings had been well attended. She said that HAD would make sustained efforts in organising more publicity and educational activities to better the understanding of OCs and owners' committees about the new requirements under the Amendment Ordinance.

25. Ms Emily LAU asked about the number of existing OCs and whether there would be sufficient Liaison Officers to attend each owners' meeting to answer any enquiries about the Amendment Ordinance. AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM) said that there were some 8 000 OCs in Hong Kong. At present, the Liaison Officer would attend an owners' meeting upon invitation. If no complicated issue was expected to arise during an owners' meeting or the responsible Liaison Officer was not available, a Community Organiser would be assigned to attend the meeting. However, the Community Organiser concerned would be briefed fully in advance about the background of the building concerned and relevant issues. AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM) added that the staffing resources in DBMLT of those districts where there were more OCs had been slightly increased.

26. The Chairman expressed appreciation of the publicity materials and new guidebooks on BMO and the Amendment Ordinance, which, in her view, were very useful. She, however, considered that the guidebook on "Frequently Asked Questions" on the Amendment Ordinance had not included adequate questions relating to the appointment of proxy by owners. The Chairman said that owners in general had come across many problems in this area and more frequently asked questions in this area could be included in the relevant guidebook. She also suggested that, in attending the district briefings, the staff

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of DMBLT should take the opportunity to collect the views of OCs and owners on further improvements needed to be made to BMO.

27. DDHA(2) welcomed the Chairman's comments. He suggested that, as a second edition of the guidebook on "Frequently Asked Questions" would be prepared later, members could send their suggestions of any further questions to be included to HAD. He added that HAD would also include those questions frequently raised by OC members/owners during the district briefings if appropriate.

Inadequacies of BMO and assistance to OCs and owners

28. Mr Albert CHAN considered that, notwithstanding the amendments made by the Building Management (Amendment) Bill 2005, some major inadequacies with BMO remained to be addressed, e.g. the lack of penalty clauses to address the non-compliance with certain statutory requirements. He said that, as OCs would not be granted legal aid, this had often deterred them from taking legal action against other parties concerned, e.g. large property management companies, in case of building management disputes. He suggested that the Administration should consider setting up a trust fund to provide financial assistance to eligible OCs and owners in this regard.

29. DDHA(2) pointed out that initiating another legislative exercise to amend BMO would require considerable preparation and consultation work. A large majority of the proposals included in the Building Management (Amendment) Bill 2005 were put forward by the former Subcommittee on Review of BMO set up under the Panel which had not made such suggestion. Nevertheless, the Administration stood ready to provide assistance in arranging meetings with relevant stakeholders such as property management companies to discuss further improvements to building management service.

30. Miss TAM Heung-man asked whether publicity would be launched on the availability of legal assistance to owners for handling disputes over building management. DDHA(2) said that the Property Management Advisory Centres under HKHS provided free guidance and advice including free legal consultation service on building management matters to the public.

31. Ms Emily LAU asked about the Administration's position in respect of introducing a mechanism of mediation for dealing with building management cases, as suggested by some members of the former Bills Committee on Building Management (Amendment) Bill 2005.

32. AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM) responded that the Administration had placed emphasis on training the Liaison Officers on mediation skills. Since 2003, HAD had engaged a tertiary institution to provide mediation course for all Liaison Officers involved in building management work. She informed members that, with the assistance of the Hong Kong Mediation Council (the

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Council) and the Hong Kong Mediation Centre (the Centre), HAD had launched a pilot scheme on mediation. A total of 15 dispute cases on building management had been nominated to the Council and the Centre for assessment on whether they could be taken on for mediation. After assessing the complexity of the cases, the Council and the Centre had taken up a total of five cases. Two out of the five proceeded cases had been settled successfully. AD4(Ag)/CLO(BM) said that HAD would further assess the effectiveness of mediation on building management disputes. She added that the staff of DMBLT had been asked to introduce the pilot scheme when liaising with OCs/owners.

IV. Meeting with Secretary for Home Affairs on his work plan
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2491/06-07(01)]

Briefing by the Secretary for Home Affairs

33. Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) briefed members on the main focus of his work plan and of the HAB's work in the coming years. His speaking note was issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2491/06-07.

National education

34. Ms Emily LAU said that a person's feeling for his/her motherland should come from one's own heart, and the feeling should not be imposed upon. She further said that some Hong Kong people had conveyed to her their dislike of the broadcast of the national anthem on television every evening. Some people also criticised the lyrics for being outdated. She asked SHA how far he understood the feeling of Hong Kong people in this regard, and what he wanted to achieve in promoting national education. She also took the opportunity to remind the Administration that some LegCo Members could not visit the Mainland as they still could not obtain the Home Visit Permits.

35. SHA responded that it was necessary to promote national education among the youth as Hong Kong had reunified with the motherland. He said that HAB would make efforts to foster a strong sense of national identity among the young people of Hong Kong. He expected that the issue of the Home Visit Permits referred to by Ms LAU should be able to be resolved in due course.

36. In response to Ms LAU's enquiry, SHA said that he did not belong to any political party and he had made such declaration under the mechanism of the Executive Council for the Register of Members' Interests.

37. Mr Albert CHAN said that he welcomed the promotion of national education and also agreed to the ideology that Chinese people should be free from oppression. He asked SHA whether he would map out a strategy to

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improve the living conditions of those Hong Kong people who were living in slavery conditions and extreme poverty.

38. SHA responded that the Mainland China had made very rapid progress, and many Chinese people had succeeded in getting out of poverty as a result of China's recent economic achievements. He said that, as for Hong Kong, HAB would seek to strengthen its community services with a view to improving the livelihood of the people.

39. The Deputy Chairman said that he hoped that the young people could understand the changes undergone by the motherland through the national education promoted by HAB. He expressed disappointment that no public officer had ever attended motion debates on topics related to the Mainland Government, such as "The 4 June incident" and "Protecting the right of the Chinese victims to demand compensation from Japan". He asked whether senior government officials including SHA in future would consider attending motion debates on such topics to give an account of the Government's official views. SHA said that each Principal Official would have his/her personal views on these topics, and the Government would decide, on the basis of the circumstances of each case, whether official views should be given at the relevant motion debate.

40. Mr Andrew CHENG said that, while he did not object to the promotion of national education, SHA should also promote the younger generation's understanding of "One Country, Two Systems", and especially the concept of "Two Systems". SHA responded that the younger generation should have a holistic understanding of the concept "One Country, Two Systems".

Political neutrality of officials in handling district work

41. Ms Emily LAU said that the staff of District Offices should be reminded that they had to be neutral in providing services to DC members or any district personnel irrespective of their political affiliation. SHA responded that the Government always upheld the principle that public resources must be used for the best interest of the community. He said that the Administration had well-established resource allocation mechanisms which ensured the principle of impartiality and fairness in the allocation process. He added that the civil servants in Hong Kong would continue to observe the principle of political neutrality in discharging their duties and responsibilities.

42. Ms LAU said that, while civil servants in Hong Kong were required to be politically neutral, the Chief Executive (CE) had said openly that "there were distinctions between the closer and those not so close". SHA responded that, from his point of view, his work as SHA was to foster a closer link among different groups and to promote greater harmony in the community. Ms LAU, however, said that CE's labelling of the pan-democrats as the "opposing party" would not be conducive to promoting greater harmony in the community.

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New principle of governance

43. Miss TAM Heung-man said that speaking from her experience of being a member of one of the four pilot DCs in the management of district facilities, she considered that the Pilot Scheme failed to provide DCs with adequate funds. It also failed to enhance DCs' role or achieve the new principle of governance advocated by CE, i.e. "reaching out to the community". She asked SHA whether there would be any other new measures or programmes which could better reflect this new principle of governance.

44. SHA responded that DCs would continue to be the Administration's key partners in district work. He pointed out that the Pilot Scheme was not the only measure to achieve the goal of reaching out to the community. He said that the Administration would strengthen the role of District Officers to better respond to the demands of local people, and he himself would conduct more visits to districts to listen to the views and demands of the community. He added that that there was mixed feedback from the pilot DCs, and some had expressed very positive comments on the Pilot Scheme.

45. Director of Home Affairs supplemented that, as the Pilot Scheme was aimed to test out protocols and working relationship amongst various stakeholders in order to pave the way for a smooth and effective roll-out of the Scheme to all the 18 districts starting January 2008, problems identified in the course of implementing the Pilot Scheme were expected. She added that a tertiary institution was commissioned to conduct an evaluation study on the implementation of the Pilot Scheme. The final mode of implementation for the management of district facilities would be decided on the basis of the experience gained from the Pilot Scheme.

46. The Chairman considered that, notwithstanding some negative feedback from certain pilot DCs, the new scheme of involving DCs in the management of district facilities was the right policy direction. She suggested that the Administration should consider further delegating powers to DCs so as to enhance their role and functions in other areas of district management, such as environmental hygiene and illegal occupation of government land. Noting that these issues could now be escalated to the Steering Committee on District Administration for the prompt attention of Heads of Departments, the Chairman expressed support for this new arrangement. She further suggested that the same arrangement should also apply to other district management issues, e.g. the problems created by on-street promotion and advertising activities which could not be resolved at the district level.

47. SHA responded that it was the policy direction of the Administration to escalate problems that could not be resolved at the district level for high-level intervention in order to improve work in districts. He added that the third term Government of HKSAR put great emphasis on team spirit, and CE and

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Principal Officials attached great importance to resolving district issues.

48. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming asked how the Administration would consider strengthening the role of District Officers in order to enhance the effectiveness of their district administration work. SHA responded that he fully appreciated the difficulties encountered by District Officers and their great pressure of work. He would strive to obtain additional resources and manpower to enhance support for District Officers' work.

49. Mr Andrew CHENG said that, under the new principle of governance, i.e. "reaching out to the community", the Administration should pay heed to the sentiment of the grassroots, not just the rich or those in power. He further said that any decision in certain policy areas, e.g. gambling, building management, and eliminating age discrimination, would have direct impact on people's livelihood. He urged HAB to consider carefully the needs of the grassroots in making any relevant policy decision under its purview. SHA undertook to take into consideration Mr CHENG's views and suggestions.

50. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming considered that with the establishment of the HAB-Heung Yee Kuk Liaison Committee, while there were some improvements to the collaboration between the Administration and the Heung Yee Kuk, the progress was rather slow. He asked about SHA's expectations of the achievements to be made by this Committee in enhancing the Administration's partnership with the Heung Yee Kuk in rural matters.

51. SHA responded that the Heung Yee Kuk had always been the Administration's important partner in rural matters. He said that the establishment of the HAB-Heung Yee Kuk Liaison Committee was aimed to strengthen mutual communication and to ensure that the distinct characteristics of rural communities would be fully considered in the formulation of public policies.

52. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he welcomed the new principle of governance - "reaching out to the community" and hoped that the Administration would also attach greater importance to the role of the Legislative Council which represented public opinions. SHA responded that he agreed fully that the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature should be strengthened in order to better serve the community. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the Administration should also step up efforts in fostering the development of a civil society in Hong Kong. He suggested that SHA should encourage the business sector to provide resources to assist the development of the civil society in a more robust way.

Statutory and advisory bodies in the public sector

53. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that in recent years, the Administration had failed to appoint people from different backgrounds to advisory and statutory

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bodies in the public sector. He considered that the Administration should uphold the principle of appointment based on merit and enhance diversity of the membership of these bodies, so that different views and opinions of the community would be reflected, especially those of the vulnerable groups. Mr Albert HO considered that more members of ethnic minorities should be appointed to these advisory and statutory bodies.

54. SHA said that, as far as those advisory and statutory bodies under the purview of HAB were concerned, the Bureau would adhere to the established guiding principles for making appointments and ensure that people from a wide range of backgrounds would be appointed to achieve balanced representation of views.

West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) development project

55. Professor Patrick LAU expressed concern about the implementation plan of the WKCD project, such as the timetable for establishing the WKCD Authority. He requested SHA to provide more details of the Administration's plan for taking forward the project and to expedite the process.

56. SHA said that he also wished to see the early implementation of the WKCD project. However, given that the project was of such a large scale, the Administration must engage in in-depth discussions and consultations with numerous stakeholders, and take into account their views carefully in the planning process.

Development of Cantonese opera

57. Mr WONG Kwok-hing urged SHA to resolve the problem of lack of performance venues for Cantonese opera given that the Sunbeam Theatre in North Point was about to close down. He said that the sector concerned hoped that a performance venue with around 1 200 seats could be provided. SHA responded that he would continue to listen to the views of the sector concerned and consider carefully their suggestions. HAB would also make the best efforts to resolve the problem of lacking performance venues.

Improving accessibility of cultural and recreational facilities by people with a disability

58. Dr Fernando CHEUNG requested the Administration to make further improvements to the accessibility of public cultural and recreational facilities by people with a disability in order to assist their integration into the society. Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (DLCS) said that the Administration had convened meetings with relevant organisations with Dr Cheung's attendance to discuss venue upgrading works for the East Asian Games and had received valuable suggestions from them. Further to these meetings, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) had followed up with the

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Architectural Services Department on how to improve the accessibility of those public facilities under the management of LCSD for the purpose of facilitating their use by people with a disability and had written to the relevant organisations to let them know the plans. Where technically feasible, works to improve accessibility of disabled persons would be carried out.

Checking shark prevention nets

59. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that sharks had been discovered in many beaches recently. He considered that the Administration should enhance the inspection of the shark prevention nets in all beaches managed by LCSD to ensure to safety of the public.

60. DLCS responded that LCSD had engaged a contractor for installing the shark prevention nets at beaches managed by LCSD and the maintenance of these nets. In order to ensure that these shark prevention nets were all intact, the department had engaged another contractor to double-check the conditions of these nets by conducting regular inspections. He further said that, in view of the frequent shark sighting off some of the beaches recently, LCSD had requested the two contractors to increase their numbers of inspections of the shark prevention nets. He further said that, following the discovery of a small shark carcass at Stanley Main Beach a few days ago, LCSD had requested the Government Flying Service to conduct searches and asked the Marine Police to pay particular attention to possible shark presence during vessel patrols.

61. Mr WONG said that the water sports centres located at, e.g. Hoi Ha, managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) were very popular. He asked how the participants in activities there were protected against any attack by sharks. DLCS said that an inter-departmental working group comprising representatives of relevant departments, e.g. AFCD and the Police, had been set up to discuss the actions required.

Other policy areas under the purview of HAB

62. Dr Fernando CHEUNG urged the Administration to make concerted efforts with the business sector and the society to promote the development of social enterprises with a view to creating employment opportunities for the vulnerable groups. Ms Emily LAU also urged SHA to ensure that legal aid service would continue to operate independently. Mr Albert HO expressed concern whether HAB would exercise undue control over the administration of the Legal Aid Department. The Chairman reminded members that the policy areas of social enterprises and legal aid fell under the purview of the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services respectively. SHA, however, took the opportunity to assure members that it was the Administration's policy that legal aid service would continue to operate independently without undue intervention.

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V. Any other business

Proposals to undertake a duty visit to Macau and overseas duty visit

Duty visit to Macau

63. The Chairman informed members that, further to the Panel's last discussion on this issue at its meeting on 11 May 2007, the Panel had scheduled to conduct a visit to Macau on 27 July 2007 from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm to study the city's experience in built heritage conservation. The permission of the House Committee to undertake the one-day visit to Macau had been obtained on 6 July 2007. The Panel agreed that non-Panel members could sign up to join the visit. She added that a circular would be issued to invite members and non-Panel members to join the visit.

Clerk

Duty visit to study overseas experience in built heritage conservation

64. The Chairman said that when this subject was discussed at the previous meeting on 18 June 2007, some members commented that the Panel should make reference to the experience of places which had heritage of similar age as that of Hong Kong's heritage and were renowned for their achievements in heritage conservation work. She further said that RLSD had conducted preliminary study on the experience of Australia, the United States and Canada, and had come to a view that the experience of Australia might have greater reference value to Hong Kong than the other two places.

65. The Chairman reminded members that RLSD had previously been requested to conduct a research study on built heritage conservation in the United Kingdom, Singapore and Macau. At her suggestion, members agreed that RLSD should study the experience of Australia, instead of the United Kingdom and Singapore, in order to facilitate members' consideration of whether Australia was suitable for conducting the duty visit. No members raised objection.

RLSD

66. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.