

立法會
Legislative Council

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Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

**Minutes of the 18th meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Friday, 19 June 2009, at 3:00 pm**

Members present:

Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Chairman)
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Dr Hon Margaret NG
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP

Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon CHIM Pui-chung
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP

Members absent:

Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBM, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che

Public officers attending:

Ms Julia LEUNG Fung-ye, JP	Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Mr Stanley YING, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Ms Bernadette LINN, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1

Ms Elsie YUEN	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)
Mrs Jessie TING, JP	Deputy Secretary for Security (1)
Mr YUE Chi-hang, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mr Tony WONG Chi-hung	Acting Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations)
Ms Rebecca LAM Hiu-tong	Deputy District Commander (Border), Hong Kong Police Force
Ms Jenny CHAN Wai-man	Principal Assistant Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services) ³
Mr Dominic LEUNG Kam-to, JP	Deputy Commissioner for Census and Statistics
Miss CHAN Ka-lin, JP	Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Social)
Mr KWONG Ming-fai	Systems Manager (3), Census and Statistics Department
Captain Michael CHAN Chi-pui, MBS, MBB, GMSM	Controller, Government Flying Service
Captain Eric LEUNG Man-chiu	Senior Pilot (Aeroplane Standards), Government Flying Service
Mr Jason YUEN Kam-tong	Acting Senior Aircraft Engineer (Support), Government Flying Service
Dr York Y N CHOW, SBS, JP	Secretary for Food and Health
Ms Sandra LEE, JP	Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health)
Dr P Y LAM, JP	Director of Health
Dr Thomas TSANG, JP	Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Dr P Y LEUNG	Director (Quality and Safety), Hospital Authority

Clerk in attendance:

Mrs Constance LI	Assistant Secretary General 1
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Staff in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT	Chief Council Secretary (1) ⁴
Mr Simon CHEUNG	Senior Council Secretary (1) ⁵
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1) ¹
Mr Frankie WOO	Legislative Assistant (1) ²

Item No. 1 - FCR(2009-10)25

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE
MADE ON 3 JUNE 2009**

The Committee decided that item PWSC(2009-10)31 should be discussed and voted on separately.

2. The Chairman put the remaining items of FCR(2009-10)25 to vote. The Committee approved all these items.

PWSC(2009-10)31 12GB Construction of a secondary boundary fence and new sections of primary boundary fence and boundary patrol road

3. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that he had visited San Tin Village, which would be affected by the reduction of the Frontier Closed Area (FCA) and the construction of the secondary boundary fence (SBF). Given that the villagers would need to use the Boundary Patrol Road (BPR) to access their fish ponds and homes within FCA and the nearby areas, he enquired how the design of the SBF would facilitate the access of local residents and their vehicles to the BPR and the FCA.

4. Mr IP Kwok-him said that he and Mr WONG Yung-kan had met with local residents affected by the project. With a sizable reduction of the FCA, he hoped that local residents in particular those operating fish ponds within FCA and nearby places could be allowed to continue to use the BPR. Given that the BPR was only 3.5 metres wide, he urged the Administration to widen the road bends so that heavy vehicles could pass through it safely.

5. The Deputy Secretary for Security(1) (DS for S) advised that the Administration aimed to minimise any inconvenience caused by the proposed project to local residents, including those operating fish ponds near the SBF and the BPR. The Administration had taken into account the needs of local residents in the design of the SBF. More than 30 access gates would be incorporated into the SBF in that area to facilitate the access of local residents to their homes and/or fish ponds via the BPR. About two-third of these gates would be equipped with electronic locks with remote control. Local residents having genuine needs to enter FCA or use the BPR might do so by obtaining from the Police appropriate Closed Area Permits. The Administration would continue to liaise with local residents to work out an acceptable arrangement for them.

6. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Mr IP Kwok-him raised the concern that at present, when the electronic lock of an access gate was out of order, local residents often had to wait for some 45 minutes or more for the Police to arrive at the site to open the gate manually. They considered such a long waiting time not acceptable, and urged the Administration to attend to the problem.

7. The Acting Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations) advised that in the event that an access gate was not functioning properly, local residents should ring up the police station for assistance. Past records indicated that police officers were usually able to arrive at the site to open the gate manually in three to 15 minutes. He assured members that the Police would meet with local residents to explore ways to reduce the waiting time.

8. Prof Patrick LAU queried why the map in Enclosure 1 to the Administration's paper did not contain details of the Shenzhen city on the other side of the boundary. He was worried that in designing the security fences, the Administration might have overlooked the conditions on the Shenzhen side. Given the huge cost required for the construction of the security fences, he urged the Administration to accord due care to their design. As certain sections of the security fences would be erected along the waterfront of Shenzhen River, a poor visual impact of the fences might give visitors crossing the Hong Kong-Mainland boundary a rather negative feeling towards Hong Kong. He thus requested the Administration to improve the aesthetical design of the security fences.

9. The Director of Architectural Services (DArchS) said that in drawing up the plan, the attention had been focused on the security fences, and therefore no details of the Shenzhen City were shown on the plan. On Prof LAU's concern about the design of the fences, DS of S and DArchS advised that following a review in 2007, the Administration had decided to reduce FCA from 2 800 hectares to 400 hectares. Due to the reduced FCA, some sections of the primary boundary fence (PBF), the SBF and the BPR would run alongside the Shenzhen River. In designing the security fences, the primary consideration was to maintain the integrity of the boundary, and to guard against illegal immigration and cross-boundary criminal activities. In order to address the security requirements, the security fences would need to be constructed with strong materials and to a specified height. The PBF would be equipped with barbed wire together with closed-circuit camera systems. As the security fences would be built alongside the BPR, trees could not be planted along them lest they would obstruct the view of the cameras and compromise security. Mitigation works would also be carried out along the BPR to guard against possible damage to the fences by vehicles. As security was the main concern, there was little room for alterations to the design of the security fences.

10. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 2 - FCR(2009-10)21

CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND

HEAD 710 – COMPUTERISATION

Census and Statistics Department

- **New Subhead "Computer Equipment and Services for the 2011 Population Census"**

11. Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Chairman of the Panel on Financial Affairs, reported that the Panel supported the Administration's proposal in principle. Panel members had given views and suggestions on the collection and use of data in the 2011 Population Census (11C).

Data collection

12. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired whether and how the 11C could facilitate the introduction of a Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW). In order to accurately work out the Gini Coefficient, he considered it necessary for the Administration to capture data on monthly household income comprehensively and meticulously. Pointing out that a large number of traditional monthly-paid jobs with fringe benefits were replaced by temporary, self-employed and hourly-rated jobs, he asked whether the categorisation of jobs in the 11C would be suitably revised so as to reflect the employment situation of Hong Kong.

13. The Deputy Commissioner for Census and Statistics (DC for C&S) advised that in order to support the introduction of SMW, the Administration had started a specific statistical programme to collect the required wage and salary data. As for the compilation of the Gini Coefficient for household income, the 11C would provide sufficiently comprehensive information on monthly household income for such purpose. As for job categories, the 11C would make reference to the occupation classification of the United Nations, which was very detailed.

14. Mr WONG Kwok-hing further enquired whether the 11C would capture the types of retirement schemes of the population as well as the employment and other circumstances of new arrivals from the Mainland. He suggested that there should be a detailed categorization of retirement schemes in the 11C. DC for C&S and the Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Social) advised that the Administration would consider collecting data on retirement schemes in 11C as far as practicable. They also advised that socio-economic data on new arrivals from the Mainland would be collected in the 11C. In fact, the Census and Statistics Department had published Thematic Reports in past population census/by census depicting the socio-economic profiles of different population groupings including the young people, the older people, new arrivals from the Mainland and ethnic minorities.

Data on ethnic minorities

15. The Chairman advised that a United Nations hearing had been scheduled for August 2009 to examine China's report under the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, of which the report of Hong Kong would form a part. With the enactment of the Racial Discrimination Ordinance in 2008, she considered it necessary for the Administration to collect data on Hong Kong citizens of ethnic minority backgrounds as detailed as possible. She enquired about the Administration's work in this respect in 11C.

16. In response, DC for C&S advised that population data in respect of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong would be covered in a thematic report. This arrangement had been adopted over the years, and would continue in the 11C. There was no need to use a special questionnaire for collection of the required data from ethnic minority respondents, as the questionnaire used in the 11C was able to cover a wide range of topics including ethnic background. In reply to a further enquiry of the Chairman, he confirmed that data on ethnic minorities were not sensitive data, an example of which was sexual orientation.

17. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 3 - FCR(2009-10)24

HEAD 166 – GOVERNMENT FLYING SERVICE

- **Subhead 603 Plant, vehicles and equipment**

New Item "Replacement of two fixed-wing aircraft and the associated mission equipment"

18. Mr LAU Kong-wah, Chairman of the Panel on Security, reported that the Panel had discussed the proposal on 5 May 2009. The issues discussed included the role of the Government Flying Service (GFS), the uniqueness of its operation, the reasons for requiring large-scale modification of the new aircraft to be procured for installation of mission equipment, the relatively high cost of the new aircraft, and the provision of spare parts for the new aircraft in future. Panel members requested the Administration to provide further information relating to the procurement of the new aircraft as well as a detailed breakdown of the expenditure in respect of mission equipment, subsequent modifications and certification work.

19. The Chairman advised that a letter from a member of the public raising a number of concerns on the proposal was tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The letter was issued to members vide LC Paper No. FC131/08-09(02) on 23 June 2009.)

20. Mrs Regina IP expressed reservations on the selection of jet planes for long-range search and rescue (SAR) operations. She enquired about the flying range of the jet planes and urged the Administration to undertake not to use them as private planes for high-level Government officials.

21. The Controller, Government Flying Service advised that the Administration had made reference to the aircraft serving similar functions of the nearby countries before choosing jet planes for GFS. The jet planes would have a flying range of up to 3 000 nautical miles. As in the past, the jet planes would not be deployed for use by Government officials for private purposes.

22. Ms Audrey EU accepted that there was a need for GFS to procure new aircraft to replace the existing J-41 aircraft. Referring to paragraph 18 of the Administration's paper which stated that the Administration would sell the two existing J-41 aircraft through open tender, she expressed doubt whether there were buyers in the market since these aircraft had been substantially modified and the buyers would run the risks of short supply of spare parts. She was also worried that the same problem would recur when the new jet planes, which would also undergo substantial modifications before use, approached the end of their serviceable lives. She queried the need of the substantial modifications to the new aircraft, and suggested that the Administration should make an effort to trade-in the J-41 aircraft in the procurement process.

23. DS for S responded that the modifications were necessary to ensure that the aircraft would meet the unique operational requirements of GFS. Besides, unlike neighbouring places, GFS, as a civilian organization, it needed to procure its aircraft with civilian certification and modification works would be required to convert such aircraft for GFS operations. The re-sale of the obsolete aircraft would be carried out in accordance with the Administration's Stores and Procurement Regulations. She would liaise with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau to see if the trade-in option as suggested by Ms EU could be adopted for the disposal of the obsolete aircraft. For members' reference, she cited that the disposal of the two Super King aircraft and the associated spares and equipment in 1999 had generated revenue of HK\$20.65 million. At present, it was difficult for the Administration to anticipate the response to the open tender for the re-sale of the existing J-41 aircraft after the commissioning of the new aircraft in 2013.

24. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a response to the concerns raised in the letter tabled at the meeting. On the query that the existing J-41 fixed-wing aircraft should have a longer serviceable life, DS for S explained that unlike other places, GFS only had two fixed-wing aircraft to conduct a wide range of operations. The high utilisation rate had reduced the lifespan of these aircraft. Due to the nature of the SAR operations of the GFS, the two J-41 aircraft were subject to hostile operating environments, including extreme weather, turbulence and highly corrosive salt-laden atmosphere prevailing at low altitudes over the sea. These conditions had placed considerable strain on the structural integrity of the aircraft and imposed abnormal wear and tear on their parts and components. Therefore, the

aircraft of GFS could only have a serviceable life of 13 to 14 years. As for the selection of jet planes for the SAR operations, she advised that jet planes could fly significantly faster to reach the search area and remain airborne for a longer time, which would enhance the effectiveness of SAR operations. On maintenance costs, DS for S pointed out that the aircraft manufacturer had ceased production of J-41 aircraft. As a result, the level of technical support available from the manufacturer and spares suppliers had been on a gradual decline and spare parts were running out of stock. When the defective components/parts could not be replaced, the aircraft would fail to meet the required safety standards. As a result, the SAR capability of GFS would be seriously affected.

25. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 4 - FCR(2009-10)29

HEAD 37 – DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- **Subhead 700 General non-recurrent**

- **New Item "Human Swine Influenza Vaccination"**

- **New Item "Pneumococcal and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination"**

26. Dr Joseph LEE, Chairman of the Health Panel, reported that the Panel had discussed the proposal on 10 June 2009. While the Panel raised no objection in principle to the proposed vaccination programme, the Administration was requested to respond to a number of queries raised by Panel members prior to this Finance Committee (FC) meeting. The Administration had provided a written response to the queries before this FC meeting.

27. Dr Joseph LEE said that he personally supported the proposal. However, given that there were still uncertainties with regard to the evolution of the human swine influenza (HSI), it might be desirable to procure the vaccines in phases. As the HSI vaccination for the Administration's target groups of two million people would be delivered principally by the public sector, he was concerned whether public hospitals and/or clinics had adequate manpower to cope with the workload.

28. The Secretary for Food and Health (SFH) responded that the decision to implement the vaccination programme was based on latest scientific evidence. The Administration would monitor the situation closely in making appropriate adjustments. Even if all vaccine manufacturers were engaged, the products might only be adequate in meeting the needs of about 5% of the global population. This implied that there would be keen competition for providing the vaccines. Regarding the suggestion of procuring the vaccines in phases, it might be more costly and create uncertainties. SFH acknowledged that it would be a challenge to involve over two million people in the vaccination programme. The Administration would mobilize staff of the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health and work out the manpower deployment plans. If necessary, support of the Auxiliary Medical Services (AMS), St. John Ambulance and private practitioners would be solicited.

29. Mr Andrew CHENG said that Members belonging to the Democratic Party supported the proposal. He commended the Administration for responding to the public aspirations with regard to the free provision of pneumococcal and seasonal influenza vaccines for the elderly, and hoped that this could become a permanent arrangement. Nevertheless, he expressed concern as to whether the Administration was able to secure the most appropriate HSI vaccines at a good price. Being a relatively small jurisdiction, Hong Kong might not have the bargaining power to ask for a lower price for the vaccines. He suggested that the Administration should consider partnering up with Macau and nearby cities to bid for a more favourable offer from the vaccine manufacturers. He opined that as there was yet a complete understanding of the effects of the HSI vaccines, the Administration should refrain from ordering a large quantity of the vaccines at the initial stage. He also expressed concern about the operational arrangements for the vaccination programme.

30. SFH advised that given its good track records, Hong Kong should have sound bargaining power to ask for a good price from vaccine manufacturers. Partnering up with other cities for bulk purchase of vaccines required time-consuming and complicated negotiations and contractual arrangements with different parties, and this might not be achievable within a short time frame. As for the actual vaccination, present information suggested that two doses of vaccine were required to sustain the protection of individuals against HSI. The Administration would require some time to work out the logistical and operational arrangements. The Administration would consult the Panel on Health Services later with an implementation plan in October 2009.

31. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the earliest time for the Administration to provide the HSI vaccines for the target groups. Given the rapid proliferation of HSI and the fact that the World Health Organization (WHO) had escalated the warning concerning HSI to the top level, he queried whether the quantity of vaccines ordered would be adequate. He invited the Administration to give advice on self-protection measures against HSI for the period between now and the actual vaccination, and asked whether the Administration would also make use of Chinese medicine to assist in the prevention of HSI.

32. SFH responded that the earliest time for the target group to receive The HSI vaccines would be around November or December 2009. Between now and then, the Administration would continue to provide guidelines on prevention of HSI for the target groups and the general public to follow. Given the similarity of HSI and seasonal influenza in terms of severity, the Administration was of the view that all social activities should continue. He believed that Chinese medicine could help strengthen individuals' resistance to diseases. As he knew, some Chinese Medicine practitioners had given herbal prescriptions against HSI for their patients. On general precautionary measures, the Controller, Centre for Health Protection (CCHP) advised that individuals should maintain good personal hygiene and wash their hands from time to time. They should keep the environment clean, maintain good ventilation and avoid visiting crowded or poorly-ventilated places. If influenza-like

symptoms developed, they should put on a mask and consult a doctor as soon as possible. HSI patients should stay home and avoid contact with others. Small children should refrain from shared use of towels and toys. HSI patients who were children should avoid taking aspirins as this might lead to undesirable side effects. The Administration would continue to publicize preventive measures against HSI in the next few months.

33. Ms Audrey EU said that in the absence of adequate clinical evidence on the effects of the HSI vaccines and formal approval from the drug regulatory authorities, it would be unwise to acquire a huge quantity of vaccines in one go and with an initial payment of a "non-refundable" deposit. She enquired what the Administration could do if the vaccines failed to receive the eventual approval from the concerned authorities, or if there was a delay in the granting of approval for the vaccines. She also queried whether it was necessary to spend \$0.7 billion to acquire a huge quantity of vaccines, considering that many people might not be willing to receive the vaccines in view of the mild nature of HSI and the uncertainty about the side effects of the vaccines.

34. The Director of Health (D of Health) explained that similar to other vaccines, the production of HSI vaccines was based on a time-proven method using eggs to cultivate the required antigens against a particular virus. In order to ensure adequate immunity, the scientific community believes that two doses of the vaccine were required for each vaccine recipient. The HSI vaccines were still being developed by vaccine manufacturers. In order to ensure their quality, the Administration would require eventual approval of the vaccines by the drug regulatory authorities such as those of the United States or the European Union as a condition in the procurement contract. D of Health explained that, due to time constraints, it was not uncommon for the vaccine manufacturers to produce vaccines while seeking approval from concerned regulatory authorities at the same time. He anticipated that the vaccine manufacturers should be able to obtain the required approval by the end of 2009. He pointed out that if a decision on the procurement of the HSI vaccines was not taken now, it might be very difficult for Hong Kong to secure adequate vaccines from the market in future.

35. Mr IP Kwok-him said that while Members belonging to Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the proposal, they were worried that the quantity of the HSI vaccines being procured by the Administration would far exceed the actual need. In this regard, he enquired about the procurement arrangements in the United States and European countries.

36. SFH responded that some countries were already in the course of procuring the HSI vaccines. As a responsible government, it was necessary to ensure adequate supply of the HSI vaccines for high-risk persons. He understood that the government of the United States had invested a total of US\$3.9 billion on the development and procurement of HSI vaccines. On further enquiry of the Chairman, D of Health responded that a possible scenario was that HSI would circulate in the community similar to seasonal influenza. He stressed that it was based on the

recommendations of the Scientific Committees of the Centre for Health Protection that the Administration decided to order five million doses for the target groups of about two million people and another 500 000 people who might opt to receive the vaccinations at their own expenses.

37. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau enquired about the number of confirmed HSI patients who had received vaccinations against seasonal influenza. He believed that the data would be useful for clinical analysis. In response, CCHP and D of Health said that the Administration did not keep such information. Up to the present, most of the HSI patients reported in Hong Kong were young people returning from overseas countries. According to WHO, seasonal influenza vaccination did not have protective effects against HSI.

38. Dr PAN Pey-chyou was disappointed with the Administration's paper, as it did not contain adequate clinical data for analysis. He considered that more data on the effectiveness of the HSI vaccines should be collected. He hoped that the Administration could provide further information comparing the differences in terms of medical complications, hospitalisation and deaths arising from HSI between the target groups and the rest. Furthermore, he enquired about the basis in support of the Science Committees' belief that The HSI vaccines could help reduce the risks of medical complications, hospitalisation and deaths of the target groups and the probability for catching Guillain-Barre Syndromes (GBS) due to HSI vaccination.

39. CCHP advised that the Science Committees had examined the scientific justifications before coming up with the present recommendations, drawing reference from what was known about seasonal influenza and HSI. The global death rate of HSI was in the region of 1 to 3 in 1 000 cases. The data in general showed that the death rate of elderly HSI patients was higher, for instance figures of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States showed that in Mexico the death rate of the aged HSI patients was as high as 4.5%. The United States data showed that children below the age of five made up the largest group, i.e. 14%, of HSI-related hospitalisation. Data of Mexico showed that those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes mellitus and metabolic abnormality accounted for 37% of the HSI death cases, with cardiovascular conditions accounting for another 17%. The relationship between GBS and seasonal influenza vaccination was as remote as one in a million cases. As for the clinical effects of the HSI vaccines, CCHP said that the Food and Drug Administration of the United States as well as the concerned regulatory bodies in Europe would grant approval to the vaccines only after the necessary clinical trials had proved that the vaccines would provide the desired effects.

40. Mr Albert CHAN considered that funding for the procurement of the HSI vaccines and that of the pneumococcal and seasonal influenza vaccines should be discussed and voted on separately. While he supported the procurement of the pneumococcal and seasonal influenza vaccines, he had much reservation about the procurement of the HSI vaccines which still had much uncertainty. He criticized the Administration for pushing through the procurement of the HSI vaccines without

adequate clinical evidence, and believed that the Administration had over-reacted towards the HSI. He pointed out that wrong vaccines could lead to disastrous results. He suggested that the Administration could continue to count on Tamiflu which had proven clinical effects, for treatment of HSI patients until there were adequate clinical evidence regarding the effects and safety of the HSI vaccines. Ms Cyd HO supported the suggestion of separating the proposal into one on the HSI vaccines and the other on the pneumococcal and seasonal influenza vaccines.

41. SFH and CCHP advised that vaccines aimed at prevention and Tamiflu was for treatment. Since influenza viruses had been known to develop antiviral resistance, Tamiflu might one day cease to be effective for treatment of infected patients. On the other hand, HSI vaccines containing adjuvants could provide cross-protection against different strains of the HSI virus. As to the suggestion of splitting the proposal into two, SFH said that it was the Administration's intention to provide an all-round protection for the target groups, in particular the elderly. It was therefore undesirable to split the proposal.

42. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the proposed HSI vaccination programme was purely cosmetic. He considered that the Administration was like taking out an insurance policy with a huge premium by investing a huge sum of money on the HSI vaccines, the effects of which were still unknown. He had serious doubt on the Administration's claim that unless the order was placed now, there would be no HSI vaccines available at the end of the year. He warned that as HSI virus kept mutating, the vaccines might become ineffective when they arrived in Hong Kong a few months later.

43. In response, SFH advised that since it would take several months for the order and delivery of the vaccines and the competition was keen, the Administration could not afford any further delay. D of Health reiterated that HSI vaccines would likely confer a certain degree of protection even if the virus mutated.

44. Ms Cyd HO suggested that in order to maintain greater flexibility with the quantity of HSI vaccines, the Administration should negotiate with the vaccine manufacturers with a view to entering into a "warranty deposit" arrangement allowing wider adjustment of the quantity of the vaccines within a particular period. Mr CHAN Hak-kan also expressed concern about the need to pay a non-refundable deposit for the procurement of the HSI vaccines. In response, D of Health agreed to explore the feasibility of Ms HO's suggestion in devising the procurement arrangements for the HSI vaccines.

45. While expressing concern that the uncertain side-effects of the HSI vaccines might discourage people from receiving the vaccines, Mr CHAN Hak-kan enquired whether it was possible for the Administration to reduce the \$50 injection cost per dose of the vaccines by engaging voluntary agencies and AMS. He also asked why the Administration could not make use of the existing refrigerators for the storage of the HSI vaccines.

46. D of Health explained that the \$50 injection cost per dose covered the expenses of administering the vaccination by the public sector. About \$6 of the cost would be for installing new refrigerators for the storage of the new HSI vaccines. He explained that since the existing refrigerators would not be suitable for the purpose, new refrigerators had to be procured. The remaining amount of about \$44 was for meeting the manpower costs. He assured members that in implementing the vaccination programme, the Administration would make good use of the available manpower resources.

47. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm. The Chairman advised that discussion of the item would continue in the next meeting to be held at 5:05 pm in the same afternoon.

Legislative Council Secretariat
12 November 2009