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Panel on Constitutional Affairs

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 23 October 2008, at 3:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present :

Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
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
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
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-yee, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP

Member attending	:	Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Members absent	:	Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou
Public Officers attending	:	Mr Stephen LAM Sui-lung Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Mr Joshua LAW Chi-kong Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Mr Raymond TAM Chi-yuen Under Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Mr Victor NG Hon-wing Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (1) (Acting) Mr Howard CHAN Wai-kee Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (2)
Clerk in attendance	:	Miss Flora TAI Chief Council Secretary (2)3
Staff in attendance	:	Mrs Vivian KAM Assistant Secretary General 2 Mr Arthur CHEUNG Senior Assistant Legal Adviser 2 Ms Clara TAM Assistant Legal Adviser 9 Mrs Eleanor CHOW Senior Council Secretary (2)4 Mrs Fanny TSANG Legislative Assistant (2)3

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I. Briefing on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2008-2009

[LC Paper No. CB(2)72/08-09(01), The 2008-2009 Policy Address – "Embracing New Challenges" and The 2008-2009 Policy Agenda booklet]

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (SCMA) briefed Members on the new and on-going initiatives of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) set out in the 2008-2009 Policy Agenda.

(Post-meeting note: The speaking note of SCMA was tabled at the meeting and issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)141/08-09 on 24 October 2008.)

Constitutional development

2. Noting that the Administration would consult the public within the first half of 2009 on the possible options for amending the methods for selecting the Chief Executive (CE) and forming the Legislative Council (LegCo) (the two electoral methods) in 2012, Mr Ronny TONG asked whether the Administration would also consult the public on the ultimate models for implementing universal suffrage for CE and LegCo respectively in 2017 and 2020. He pointed out that it would not be meaningful to discuss the transitional electoral arrangements for 2012 when one did not know the direction for achieving universal suffrage. In his view, the retention of functional constituency (FC) seats in any form for the formation of LegCo did not comply with the international standards of universal suffrage. Mr TONG said that he also failed to see how an increase in the number of FC seats for the LegCo election in 2012 could facilitate the eventual abolition of FCs. He therefore would not support any proposal for increasing LegCo seats in 2012 because in accordance with the 50:50 ratio between LegCo Members returned by FCs and geographical constituencies (GCs) as stipulated in the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress made on 29 December 2007 (the NPCSC Decision), it would invariably increase the number of FC seats.

3. SCMA said that it was the constitutional responsibility of the third term Government to put in place the electoral methods for 2012 within its tenure. It would be the constitutional responsibility of the fourth and fifth term CE to address, together with the fifth term and sixth term LegCo respectively, the electoral methods for 2016, 2017 and 2020. SCMA said that the Administration aimed to attain universal suffrage by three stages -

- (a) Stage 1 from the present to 2012 - to further democratize the two electoral methods for 2012;
- (b) Stage 2 from 2012 to 2017 - to attain universal suffrage for CE in 2017 and how to further democratize the electoral method for LegCo in 2016; and

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- (c) Stage 3 from 2017 to 2020 - to attain universal suffrage for LegCo.

SCMA said that the public was free to give views on the ultimate models for universal suffrage at any of these stages. The target of the current term Government was to determine the two electoral methods for 2012 in order to lay a solid foundation for attaining universal suffrage for CE in 2017, and for LegCo in 2020.

4. SCMA further said that in order to further democratize the political system in Hong Kong, more room had to be provided for political talents to participate in public affairs. In his view, grooming political talents would provide favourable conditions for implementing universal suffrage. It was up to the current term Government and the current term LegCo to decide whether the size of LegCo should be expanded in 2012 and if so, how the electoral method could be further democratized within the framework laid down by the Basic Law and the NPCSC Decision.

5. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that when formulating its electoral methods, Hong Kong should make reference to Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provided that every citizen should have the right and opportunity to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections, not the NPCSC Decision. He held the view that FCs should be abolished in entirety and the two electoral methods for 2012 should be decided by the public by way of holding a referendum.

6. SCMA responded that Hong Kong would attain universal suffrage in its constitutional development because of the Basic Law, not ICCPR. The electoral models for implementing universal suffrage would be consistent with the principles of "universal" and "equal" suffrage. The Report on Public Consultation on the Green Paper on Constitutional Development (the Green Paper Report) published in December 2007 revealed that there were divergent views on when universal suffrage should be implemented. While there were views that dual universal suffrage should be implemented in 2012, there were also views that universal suffrage for CE and LegCo should be implemented after 2012. Despite the divergence of views, the timetable for attaining universal suffrage as provided in the NPCSC Decision were accepted by over 60% of the public, as revealed in an opinion poll. According to the Basic Law, any amendments to the two electoral methods would require tri-partite consensus, i.e. the endorsement of a two-thirds majority of all Members of LegCo, the consent of CE and the approval of NPCSC; but not to be decided by way of a referendum.

7. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that since the handover of sovereignty 11 years ago, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) had not fought for democracy for the people of Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government had second guessed the will of the Central Authorities and

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accordingly, concluded in the Green Paper Report that dual universal suffrage should not be implemented in 2012. Mr WONG opined that the HKSAR Government and its officials had distorted and suppressed the aspirations of the people of Hong Kong for universal suffrage and a high degree of autonomy. The NPCSC Decision was the outcome of such acts. He pointed out that since the delivery of the CE's Policy Address 2008-2009, the popularity rate of the third term Government had dropped by 21% according to an opinion poll conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Mr WONG also queried why the appointed seats in the District Councils (DCs) could not be abolished as it would not be inconsistent with the Basic Law or the NPCSC Decision.

8. SCMA responded that none of the Government preceding the third term Government was able to get a timetable for implementing universal suffrage in Hong Kong. The timetable provided in the NPCSC Decision did not come by easily and Members should seize the opportunity to take forward constitutional development. As regards the retention of appointed DC seats, SCMA explained that the Administration had put forth in October 2005 a package of proposals for the methods of selecting CE in 2007 and for forming LegCo in 2008 (the 2005 proposed package). In response to Members' concern, the Administration had made a concession that if LegCo had supported the 2005 proposed package, appointed DC seats would be abolished in two to three phases. The adjustments to the proposed package, however, were not supported by pan-democratic Members and could not be processed further. Ms Emily LAU, however, pointed out that the Administration at that time had not given an undertaking that appointed DC seats would be abolished ultimately.

9. Ms Emily LAU referred to paragraph 133 of the CE's Policy Address which stated that "not only can patriotism and democracy co-exist, they can also complement each other in politics. Building a democratic system on a shared sense of national identity is where our future lies". Ms LAU said that in her case, patriotism and democracy could not co-exist. She was patriotic and did not support Hong Kong to become independent, yet her zest for democracy had prevented her from visiting the Mainland. She pointed out that a democratic system should be established according to international standards, not the aforementioned elements.

10. SCMA said that when Mr Donald Tsang first assumed office as CE, he led all LegCo Members to visit the Pearl River Delta in September 2005 with a view to fostering relationship with the Mainland. The Administration observed that by voting against the 2005 proposed package, pan-democratic Members had put up new hurdles to foster their relationship with the Mainland. SCMA further recalled that when meeting with some Members in Shenzhen at the end December of 2005, Mr QIAO Xiaoyang, Deputy Secretary General of NPCSC had remarked that there were two views expressed by the public. First, the public had asked for a timetable for universal suffrage. Second, more than 60% of the public had supported the 2005 proposed package. Both views should be respected. SCMA

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considered that pan-democratic Members had acted not only against the wish of the general public by voting against the 2005 proposed package, but had also lost the opportunity to improve relationship with the Mainland.

11. Ms Emily LAU expressed dissatisfaction with the SCMA's remark. She was not aware of any condition attached to Members' visit to the Mainland, which was a basic right of a Chinese national. She clarified that one of the reasons for pan-democratic Members not supporting the 2005 proposed package was because of the Government's failure to provide a timetable for universal suffrage. Although the NPCSC Decision had provided a timetable for universal suffrage, there were conditions attached to it and failing which universal suffrage for CE in 2017 and for LegCo in 2020 could not be realised. In addition, she considered that the implementation of universal suffrage for LegCo could be a sham if FC seats were to be retained in any form.

12. Ms Audrey EU pointed out that Ms Emily LAU had been denied entry to the Mainland for a long time and this had nothing to do with the 2005 proposed package. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung echoed her view. He further asked whether the Government would implement any proposal for constitutional development if it was supported by over 60% of the public.

13. SCMA responded that permits for Mainland visits were issued by the Mainland authorities in accordance with the laws on the Mainland. The Administration had made efforts to foster relationship between Members and the Mainland and would continue to do so. SCMA further said that whether a proposal for constitutional development which was supported by over 60% of the public would be implemented depended on many important considerations. Apart from the support of the public, the other important consideration was the constitutional reality that it had to be supported by a two-thirds majority of Members. Given that the timetable for universal suffrage provided in the NPCSC Decision did not come by easily, he urged Members to work with the Government to make progress on constitutional development. If the size of LegCo was to be expanded in 2012, it was necessary to consider how the democratic elements in FC election should be enhanced, e.g. how the additional FC seats should be allocated.

14. Ms Margaret NG expressed the view that while SCMA considered that it was an unprecedented accomplishment for the third term Government to get a timetable for universal suffrage, the Administration had as a matter of fact given up implementing universal suffrage on behalf of Hong Kong by doing so. Ms NG said that the meaning of universal suffrage had all along excluded the existence of FCs in any form, but it seemed that the Administration was inclined to go for retaining FCs and increasing the LegCo seats in 2012 which would also mean an increase in FC seats. She asked the Administration to make clear whether FCs would be retained forever, or abolished in one go, in 2020 if the number of FC seats was increased in 2012. In the former case, the

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Administration should also consult the public on the future of FCs in the forthcoming public consultation exercise on the possible options for amending the two electoral methods.

15. SCMA said that expanding the size of LegCo in 2012 was one of the proposals received during the public consultation exercise conducted in 2007, and the Administration had brought it up for the consideration of Members. He pointed out that CE and his Government at this stage had not formed any view on the future of FCs and considered it inappropriate to make a decision within the tenure of the current term Government. It was the duty of the fourth term CE elected in 2012 to work with the Fifth LegCo on the implementation of universal suffrage for the 2017 election; and the duty of the fifth term CE elected by universal suffrage to work with the Sixth LegCo on the arrangement for implementing universal suffrage for the 2020 LegCo election. He reiterated that the current term CE would focus on dealing with issues relating to the electoral methods for 2012, but the current term Government would be happy to listen to other views relating to constitutional development.

16. Ms Margaret NG said that it was logical to expect the Administration to have a future direction about the retention of FCs or otherwise when putting forward the option of increasing LegCo seats in 2012. She stressed that FCs should be abolished for the implementation of universal suffrage. SCMA reiterated that in accordance with the NPCSC Decision, half of the increased LegCo seats must go to FCs in 2012. Increasing the number of FC seats did not necessarily mean that FCs would be retained forever.

17. Ms Cyd HO recalled that in the 2007 CE election, CE had remarked that a politician worked for the well-being of his term of office while a statesman worked for the well-being of the next generation. As SCMA had said that the current term Government would work on the electoral methods for 2012 only, Ms HO enquired whether the constitutional development of Hong Kong was in the hands of politicians or those of statesmen. She further said that as universal and equal suffrage included the right for all citizens to nominate and to vote for a candidate at an election, imposing restrictions on the nomination of CE candidates would not be consistent with the principle of equal and universal suffrage. At most, the election of CE could be called an election on the basis of one-person-one vote.

18. SCMA said that the current term Government worked for the long-term interest of the Hong Kong people. During the election, CE had undertaken to deal with the issue of universal suffrage in a proactive manner. In response to CE's recommendations drawn from the Green Paper Report, NPCSC had provided a timetable for universal suffrage, which was an important milestone for the constitutional development of Hong Kong. SCMA said that Article 44 of the Basic Law (BL 44) stipulated the eligibility criteria of a CE candidate. BL 45 further stipulated that CE should be selected by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures. In the

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penultimate paragraph of the NPCSC Decision, NPCSC provided a framework leading to the implementation of universal suffrage for CE. According to the Decision, the nominating committee might be formed with reference to the current provisions regarding the Election Committee in Annex I to the Basic Law. The nominating committee should in accordance with democratic procedures nominate a certain number of candidates for the office of CE, who was to be elected through universal suffrage by all registered electors of Hong Kong on a one-person-one-vote basis. In this connection, incumbent Members who wished to participate in the decision process of forming the nominating committee could consider running in the 2012 LegCo election.

19. Mrs Regina IP said that the remuneration for DC members and LegCo Members was low, as compared with the Under Secretaries, Political Assistants and Administrative Officers. She expressed concern that the unattractive level of remuneration was not conducive to grooming political talents and hence would adversely affect constitutional development.

20. SCMA said that the remuneration of DC members had been adjusted two years ago and that of the incumbent LegCo Members had improved substantially following last year's review. The Administration would review their remuneration packages from time to time. He, however, added that opening up more room for political participation was another way to groom political talents.

2008 LegCo election

21. Ms Audrey EU said that despite members' request, the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) had not introduced measures to regulate the conduct of exit polls to ensure fairness in an election. Dr Robert CHUNG, who had carried out exit polls in past elections, found that 10 out of 30 respondents did not give an answer or deliberately gave a misleading answer in the 2008 LegCo election. As a result, the outcome of exit poll was no longer reliable. Dr CHUNG held the view that the failure in conducting meaningful exit polls would affect the development of a civic society. Ms EU asked whether EAC would consider reviewing the EAC guidelines so that use of exit poll results by a candidate or his political party to plan electioneering strategy before the close of poll would be prohibited. For instance, EAC could consider measures for restricting the conduct of exit polls to academic institutions only.

22. SCMA said that the EAC guidelines had set out the rules for the conduct, publication and broadcast of exit poll results to avoid undue influence over electors, resulting in unfair interference with the election process. Media and organisations concerned were required to refrain from announcing the results of exit polls or make specific remarks or predictions on the performance of individual candidates until after the close of poll. The Administration maintained the view that exit polls could be conducted by any person and organisation, and there was no guarantee that academic institutions would not disclose exit poll results to any person or organisation before the close of poll.

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23. SCMA further recalled that in the 2008 LegCo election, some candidates and political parties had called for voters not to answer questions of exit polls or not to co-operate with exit pollsters when interviewed. That would inevitably affect the reliability of exit poll results. The remarks made by Dr CHUNG a few days before the polling day that he would pass data of the exit poll to the media before the close of poll had further complicated the matter. SCMA said that EAC, in accordance with law, would make a report to CE within three months after the election. The report would contain a review of the relevant electoral arrangements for the 2008 LegCo election and recommend improvement measures for future elections.

Mechanism for amending the Basic Law

24. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that he had pursued the issue relating to the mechanism for amending the Basic Law for years but the Administration had not made any progress. He asked about the latest position of the Administration and the number of meetings held between the HKSAR Government and the Mainland Authorities in the past few years.

25. SCMA said that he had reported the position of the Central Authorities and the HKSAR Government on the mechanism for amending the Basic Law at the Panel meeting held on 17 March 2008. Since 1999, the HKSAR Government had held about 20 meetings with the Central Authorities. It was the consistent position of the Central Authorities and the HKSAR Government that given that the Basic Law was the legal safeguard for ensuring the implementation of the basic policies of "one country, two systems" and for maintaining the long term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, its provisions should not be amended lightly. In addition, BL 159 had already prescribed the major requirements for amending the Basic Law. As there was no need to amend the Basic Law at this stage, there was no need to specify further the relevant amendment mechanism.

Cooperation with the Mainland and post-quake reconstruction support work in Sichuan

26. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that the Finance Committee had approved in July 2008 the injection of \$2 billion into the Trust Fund in support of Reconstruction in the Sichuan Earthquake Stricken Areas (the Trust Fund). He considered that as SCMA and the Secretary for Development had returned to Hong Kong on 11 October 2008 after their visit to Sichuan and meeting with the Sichuan Provincial Government, the Administration should have taken the earliest opportunity to report to LegCo in more detail the latest reconstruction work. Mr LEE also enquired whether the Administration would make further funding application to the Finance Committee for the reconstruction work in the current LegCo session.

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27. SCMA said that the Administration had already issued a LegCo Brief on 11 October 2008 detailing the latest cooperation arrangement with the Sichuan Provincial Government with regard to restoration and reconstruction of the stricken areas in the Sichuan earthquake. To facilitate project management and monitoring work, the HKSAR Government had concluded a co-operation arrangement with the Sichuan Provincial Government, a copy of which was annexed to the LegCo Brief. The HKSAR Government and the Sichuan Provincial Government had agreed that a total of 20 reconstruction projects would be implemented in the first stage. These projects covered infrastructural facilities, medical services, education, social welfare services etc. with an estimated financial commitment of \$1,900 million. The current amount of the Trust Fund would be sufficient to cover the cost of the first stage of work.

28. SCMA further said that post-quake reconstruction work was immense and the HKSAR's overall commitment was not expected to exceed \$10 billion. Apart from seeking funding approval from LegCo, the Government would also raise fund from the community. So far, the Hong Kong Jockey Club had committed \$1 billion and the public had donated about \$7 million for reconstruction of Sichuan earthquake stricken areas. The HKSAR Government would monitor progress of the first stage of reconstruction projects and would discuss with the Sichuan Provincial Government the next stage of work at an appropriate time. The Administration would further report work progress to the Panel on Development at its meeting on 28 October 2008.

29. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that in view of the economic downturn, there was a need to expedite the implementation of the 10 large-scale infrastructure projects and to enhance economic integration and communication with the Mainland, in particular the Guangdong province. It was also in the long term interest of Hong Kong to complement the development of Guangdong by cooperating in cross-boundary infrastructure projects such as the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. While the infrastructure projects funded by the Hong Kong side required the approval of LegCo, Members sometimes did not have a full picture of the social and economic impact brought about by these infrastructure projects. He considered that with the increasingly diversified areas of co-operation, it would be useful if Members could be briefed by relevant Mainland officials on the overall and specific development plans of Guangdong. The information would enable Members to understand the benefits of these projects and hence help Members decide whether to support the financial proposals concerned. Mr LAU further said that Members had the responsibility to monitor progress of cross-boundary projects and the use of such funds approved by the Finance Committee. It would be useful, for example, for Members to be briefed by relevant Mainland officials on the progress of the reconstruction projects in Sichuan and on the latest development of the 2010 Expo to be held in Shanghai. He also stressed the importance of further deliberating on the role and positioning of Hong Kong in the formulation of the National 12th Five-Year Plan.

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30. SCMA concurred with Mr LAU that enhanced cooperation and exchange of views with the Mainland authorities was useful. As far as the formulation of the National 12th Five-Year Plan was concerned, the HKSAR Government had established direct working contact with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), which had key coordination authority on the National 12th Five-Year Plan. On that basis, the Government would continue to coordinate efforts among relevant government bureaux and strengthen liaison with NDRC and other Mainland authorities concerned to take the matter forward. The HKSAR Government would also continue to foster closer co-operation with various Mainland provinces/regions/municipalities under the established co-operation mechanisms, including the Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Co-operation and Development Forum, the Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference, etc. Addressing Mr LAU's concerns, SCMA said that the Administration would arrange, where appropriate, for Members to meet with Guangdong/Shanghai officials during their future visits to Hong Kong for the purpose of fostering mutual understanding. The Administration would also report progress of the reconstruction projects of Sichuan and the Shanghai Expo 2010 to the Panel on Development and the Panel on Commerce and Industry respectively in due course.

31. Ir Dr Raymond HO enquired how and what areas Hong Kong would make effective and timely contribution to the Mainland's social and economic development in the context of the National 12th Five-Year Plan. He also enquired whether the Government would consult LegCo and the public before making such contribution.

32. SCMA responded that the National 12th Five-Year Plan covered a wide range of areas. In complementing the formulation of the National 12th Five-Year Plan, the Administration would coordinate efforts among government bureaux/departments concerned and work with NDRC to conduct studies on topics of common interests. Primarily, the study would focus on the status of Hong Kong as an international financial, trading and shipping centre. Other areas such as infrastructure planning and large-scale development projects across the boundary might also be considered. The Administration had just begun its study on the National 12th Five-Year Plan and relevant professions would be invited to discussion forums to give views. The Administration would also consult the relevant Panels and the public as and when necessary.

Hong Kong-Taiwan relations

33. Referring to the sponsorship offered to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in organising activities to promote Hong Kong/Taiwan relations, Ir Dr Raymond HO asked whether any application guidelines would be available.

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34. SCMA said that this was the first time the Administration had set aside \$1.5 million in 2008-2009 to sponsor NGOs to promote exchanges and liaison between Hong Kong and Taiwan. NGOs which sought to promote academic, business and cultural exchanges with Taiwan in the form of symposiums or visits could make applications to CMAB for sponsorship. As regards cross-strait economic and business activities, the Trade Development Council would soon set up a branch office in Taipei which would render assistance to Hong Kong businessmen when needed.

Regional support service centres for ethnic minorities

35. Members noted that in the course of scrutinising the Race Discrimination Bill, Members had raised concern about the language barrier encountered by ethnic minorities in gaining access to essential public services. Noting that the Administration was planning to set up four regional support service centres in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West to provide interpretation service for ethnic minorities and organise activities to promote their integration into the community, Mr WONG Kwok-hing queried whether the number of support service centres to be established was adequate. Taking New Territories West as an example, he considered that it would need at least three centres given its wide geographical coverage. He urged the Administration to take into account the geographical spread of ethnic minority population in Hong Kong in determining the locations for these centres. He also enquired about the bureau responsible for planning the setting up of the centres.

36. SCMA said that since CMAB had taken over the human rights portfolio from the Home Affairs Bureau, it had initiated a plan to set up service centres for ethnic minorities. Instead of the Government operating the centres, NGOs which had the experience and expertise in serving ethnic minorities would be invited to establish and operate the centres. To provide flexibility for applications, applicants would be allowed to propose appropriate locations and venues within the regions for the setting up of the centres.

37. The meeting ended at 5:04 pm.