

(Information Paper)

Progress Report of the 7th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 7th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 18 November 2004.

Public Consultation on Legislating Against Racial Discrimination

2. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) said that laws of Hong Kong already prevent the Government and the public sector from discrimination on racial grounds in delivering services and discharging their duties. The proposed legislation aimed to extend the anti-racial discrimination arrangements to cover the private sector and individuals. Since the mainland China had signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (the Convention) and Hong Kong was a common law jurisdiction, legislation was required to bring the Convention into effect in Hong Kong. The consultation period for the proposed legislation was originally six months, but the Government was considering extending the period a little longer as requested by various sectors. The HAB planned to table the bill at the Legislative Council (LegCo) in May 2005 for enactment in 2005/06.

Demolition of the Hung Hom Peninsula

3. The KCDC considered it unwise to demolish the Hung Hom Peninsula since all kinds of problems were bound to arise. In view of wide public concern, the KCDC requested the Government to hold discussions with the developers, and act as a bridge by arranging meetings for it and the developers so that it could voice its opinions and explore with the developers the possibility of retaining the property through consultation. (Note: A special meeting was convened by the KCDC on 9 December at which the two developers concerned, namely Sun Hung Kai Properties and the NWS Holdings, explained the demolition plan to Members and answered their queries. While most Members were opposed to demolition on environmental grounds, some opined that the problem should be dealt with in the spirit of the contract.

Illegal Sale of Diesel Oil in Residential Areas

4. Members asked whether the problem of illegal sale of diesel oil had been improved since the introduction of legislative amendments in the last LegCo session to reduce the storage of diesel oil and empower the Fire Services Department (FSD) to issue warning on the spot. They further asked whether the recent surge in international crude oil prices had any impact on the illegal sale of diesel oil. The FSD

said in response that, since its enactment, the ordinance had had considerable deterrent effect on the illegal business of filling motor vehicles with diesel oil, and such illegal activities were decreasing. To enhance the control of dangerous goods, the FSD was considering substantially reducing the exempted amount of diesel oil now applicable to non-industrial premises. In reply, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) said that according to the outcome of its territory-wide enforcement actions and the information gathered, the problem of illegal sale of diesel oil had not deteriorated. The KCDC urged the departments concerned to continue their efforts to root out such illegal acts and eliminate the threats to the lives and properties of the public.

Banning Smoking in Public Places

5. Members pointed out that it had been a long time since the Government publicised the hazards of second-hand smoking. They asked why legislation had not yet been enacted to ban smoking for the public good. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) responded that the Government attached great importance to the problems of smoking and second-hand smoking, and the HWFB planned to table the relevant bill at the LegCo within this legislative year to expand the statutory no-smoking areas to all indoor workplaces, food premises, and karaoke, etc. The HWFB told Members that when new regulations were introduced, the powers of the Tobacco Control Office of the Department of Health would be enhanced to ensure the successful implementation of the new legislation. In addition, to address the smoking problem, a full-scale publicity campaign and ancillary programmes would be launched to familiarise the industry and the public with the tobacco control regulations.

Requesting Public Transport Operators to Offer Half-price Concessionary Tickets to the Disabled

6. Members pointed out that since the disabled needed their family members to accompany them when they went out, they both had to incur heavy travelling expenses. In addition, as it was not easy for the disabled to get an interview and find a job, if they had to bear considerable travelling expenses, their social lives would be seriously affected. It was hoped that public transport operators would fulfill their social obligations and help the vulnerable groups by offering concessionary fares to the disabled to reduce their travelling expenses. The Transport Department (TD) said that the Government hoped to help the disabled assimilate into the community and had been taking active steps to discuss with public transport operators the possibility of offering concessionary fares to the disabled. The TD further added that it would monitor the Rehabus service, renew certificates of registration for the disabled, and

lobby the public transport operators to offer concessionary fares and improve ancillary facilities.

Concern over the Frequent Occurrence of Aluminium Windows Falling from Height

7. Members drew the meeting's attention to the frequent occurrence of aluminium windows falling from height in the district. Although the Buildings Department (BD) had recently issued leaflets and broadcast an announcement on the television for publicity, it had not yet raised the awareness of property owners about their liability for falling aluminium windows and the resulting penalties. Members hoped that the departments concerned would step up public education and publicity in this aspect. They also suggested that the BD should, through legislation, require those buildings that had more than two occurrences of falling aluminium windows to inspect their windows thoroughly and install window safety buckles to prevent future occurrences. Members expressed concern over the qualifications of workers installing aluminium windows and queried whether they had received the necessary professional training. They suggested the implementation of a licensing system to protect public safety. The BD said that in addition to aluminium windows, concrete fragments, supporting structures for air-conditioners and canopies falling from height would also pose a threat to the public. The Government would monitor the condition of buildings, and spread the message of safe installation of aluminium windows to educate property owners. Moreover, exhibition boards would be displayed in eight government office buildings in August to promote aluminium window safety.

Lack of Fair Competition in the Petrol Market

8. Members remarked that whenever petrol prices rose, different fuel suppliers tended to increase the prices of their products by the same amount. Members suspected that they jointly manipulated the prices. They requested the Government to review the current monopoly of fuel suppliers over oil prices, and to pass legislation to facilitate fair competition in the petrol market as soon as possible to prevent the unfair situation from persisting to the disadvantage of consumers.

KCDC Chinese New Year Gathering

9. The Chinese New Year gathering organized by the KCDC together with the Kowloon City District Office was scheduled for 18 February 2005 (the tenth day of the first lunar month).

