

Progress Report of the 10th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 10th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 21 May 2009.

Concern over the Incident Involving the Fall of a Helicopter

2. The Civil Aviation Department (CAD) stated that as the incident was under investigation, details could not be disclosed at this stage. The initial probe found that the accident did not arise from a mechanical failure of the helicopter. And the pilot had not put on an air show as reported by the media. Such a misunderstanding presumably stemmed from the swirling motion of the helicopter in the air at the time of the accident. According to the Lands Department, government land near the helicopter take-off and landing site was not let out for other purposes for safety reasons. On the day concerned, a vehicle containing dangerous drugs was found at the site because the car park had impermissibly rented out parking spaces. A warning letter was then issued to the car park requiring the operator to prohibit parking of vehicles with dangerous goods. The Planning Department added that since the airport was moved to Chek Lap Kok, the CAD had continuously been discussing with the Hong Kong Aviation Club (HKAC) about the selection of a new site for flying activities. Some locations were suggested for HKAC's consideration but no consensus was reached so far.

3. Members noted that the HKAC had all along been operating in conformity with the requirements set by the CAD and a good record was maintained. However, flying activities were only entertainment for a minority and hence should not be given a higher significance than safety of residents in the neighbouring area. Given that no new measures were adopted to prevent the recurrence of similar accidents, Members unanimously agreed to request the CAD to order a suspension of all flying events in the area around the old Kai Tak Airport pending the outcome of the investigation.

4. Considering that the Government and the HKAC had failed to reach a compromise on the selection of a new site for over a decade, Members urged the CAD and the departments concerned to negotiate with the HKAC more proactively so as to

settle the issue.

Call for Strengthening the Regulation of Cyber Cafes

5. Members noted that the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) conducted a public consultation on ways to regulate internet computer services centres (establishments commonly known as cyber cafes) in 2002. According to the prevailing views, a licensing system should not be introduced to avoid impacts to the development of the industry. In the light of public concern about influences of cyber cafes, the HAB issued the Code of Practice for Internet Computer Services Centres Operators to provide guidelines for voluntary compliance by operators in the industry. The contents of such guidelines were reviewed regularly in order to meet the expectations of the community.

6. Members reflected that cyber cafes nowadays did not merely provide internet computer services to enable customers to browse information as years ago but mainly offered internet games like game centres for entertainment of visitors. Since cyber cafes were not strictly governed by regulations as game centres, it was common that games involving violence and even sex were provided. In view of this, the results of the public consultation conducted by the HAB in 2002 had outlived its usefulness. It came the time to launch a new round of consultation to seek the views of the public on the introduction of a licensing system for the industry so as to ensure its healthy development under regulations.

Supermarket Pricing Tactics Misleading the Public

7. Members were concerned about the allegation of trade malpractices of the two major supermarkets by raising the price of some commodities before Friday and making a slight downward adjustment on Friday to produce a sham of price reduction. Therefore they appealed to the Government to follow the practice of foreign countries like Australia and the United Kingdom by formulating appropriate policies to stop supermarkets from adopting misleading pricing strategies for the sake of safeguarding the interests of consumers.

8. In response, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) pointed out that the Government spared no efforts in taking action against unscrupulous traders. However, when governing the business practices of different traders, the Government had to strike a balance between the interests of traders and

consumers. The CEDB appreciated that there might be inadequacies in current legislation to combat unscrupulous practices of traders. Hence, the Consumer Council (CC) was invited earlier on to conduct a study on the current policies protecting the rights of consumers. At the moment, the CEDB was examining the study results and proposals of the CC. CC had been allocated additional resources by the Government for carrying out three price comparison surveys with a view to providing more information about commodity prices. The public could enquire about food prices weekly at the Public Enquiry Service Centre of the District Office of various districts where surveys had been conducted. The website of the CC also uploaded such information, plus the price of commodities sold on line and daily price of fresh food items sold in the markets selected.

Meeting with the Director of Lands

9. The Director of Lands briefed Members on the sale of government land in Kowloon City District, the utilization of land at old Kai Tak Airport, management work on illegal occupation of government land, arrangements for short-term lease of government land and work related to land lease enforcement.

10. Members took the opportunity to make the following requests:

- (1) To review the policy of toleration for squatter areas formulated in 1982 with the aim of clearing ruined quatters to free precious land resources for development;
- (2) To avoid further mismatch of land resources which causes a loss in government revenue, for example, allocation of a piece of land in Fat Kwong Street with high commercial value to the Hong Kong Polytechnics University for constructing a student hostel;
- (3) To assist owners of factory buildings intending to turn vacant factory premises into other usages as far as possible so as to successfully help transform industrial area;
- (4) To make early planning to allocate the many pieces of land left vacant for a long time in the Kai Tak Development Project, which took over ten years to complete, for community purposes; moreover, sites included in the Application List for land sale but not to be sold in the short term

should be temporarily developed into community areas;

- (5) To stop illegal traders from operating private columbaria in residential buildings through restriction of land lease provisions; and
- (6) To pay efforts to curb unauthorized extension of shops to the pavement openly for business and hawking.

Kowloon City District Office
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