

Progress Report of the 13th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 13th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 12 November 2009.

Public Consultation on Air Quality Objectives Review

2. Members welcomed the proposals of the Environment Bureau for improving the quality of air in Hong Kong step by step through strengthening the control on sources of pollution such as power stations and old vehicles, implementing traffic control scheme, achieving energy efficiency and expanding the rail system with the aim to meet the new standard set by the World Health Organisation. Given the fact that vehicle emissions were a major source of pollution, Members suggested that the Government should actively consider the introduction of a bus-bus interchange scheme at Nathan Road so as to effect a substantial reduction in the number of buses traveling along similar routes to avoid duplication. Besides, Members also urged the Government to promote the use of environment-friendly vehicles and encourage shopping malls to provide charging stations in a bid to make such vehicles become popular.

Minimum Wage Bill

3. Members endorsed the Minimum Wage Bill introduced by the Government but advised that details of legislation should be worked out carefully so as to avoid an outcome contrary to expectation as the new ordinance might cause a substantial reduction of low-paid jobs. When the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme was launched, there were cases in which unscrupulous employers circumvented the law by adopting false self-employment practices and playing tricks in calculation of wages in order to evade legal responsibility. Hence, Members called for the Government to provide additional resources for enforcement of law to ensure that employees could really benefit.

Conflicts between Funeral Services Industry and the Development of Kowloon City District

4. Members appreciated the value of existence of the funeral service industry.

However, with the demand of public columbaria outstripping supply and the Government's refusal to regulate the industry, Members expressed concern over the growth in the number of private niches in Hung Hom, To Kwa Wan and even Kowloon Tong, leading to the phenomenon of the dead becoming neighbours to people alive, which violated the taboo of the Chinese. To tackle the increasingly serious problem of development of the industry in residential premises, Members made various proposals for the Government's consideration:

- (1) To amend the existing law or draft a new piece of legislation in order to ensure that the funeral service industry would develop in a systematic way in accord with changes in local communities;
 - (2) To form an inter-departmental working committee to consider comprehensively the authority of the Government in handling this issue with a view to finding a long term solution;
 - (3) To call for the District Board in 18 districts to study the possibility of building niche in their own district to meet the demand of local residents;
 - (4) To look for uninhabited islands to relocate shops in the funeral service industry scattered in different places;
 - (5) To ask the Government to suspend the processing of all applications for opening shops providing funeral service in Hung Hom district; and
 - (6) To explore ways to solve the existing problems completely within five years.
5. To indicate the stance of the KCDC on this issue, Members passed the following two motions:
- (1) Strong Demand for the Government to Enact the Legislation to Prohibit the Provision of Niche in or near Residential Premises; and
 - (2) Protest against Any Plan of Building an Additional Funeral Parlour in Kowloon City District

Meeting with the Director of Water Supplies

6. Members were informed of the following major items elaborated by the Director of Water Supplies:

Dongjiang Water – Although droughts occurred in North Guangdong, the water purchased by Hong Kong came from the lower reaches of the river. Moreover, the amount of water flow in the middle and lower reaches of Dongjiang should be kept up to a certain level so as to maintain the ecology and environment as well as navigation along the river. Thus, despite our suggestion of reducing the intake of water from Dongjiang, the Department of Water Resources of Guangdong Province considered this unnecessary and vetoed the proposal. Hong Kong would act in reaction to the request of our counterpart in Guangdong when necessary;

Monitoring of Water Pipes – In March 2008, the GSM Monitoring System was introduced for detecting the operation of remote water supply networks via transmission of sound data. The pilot scheme, which employed devices functioning like endoscopes, achieved close assessment of the condition of underground water pipes;

Progress of Replacement and Rehabilitation Programme of Water Mains – The Department had initially selected 3,000km of aged water mains for replacement across the territory and works for over 1,000km were completed so far. The programme was implemented faster than some developed cities at a rate of replacing 30km water mains or more monthly;

Prevention of Eruption of Underground Water Pipes – Underground water pipes burst not only because of the aging problem but also changes in the surrounding area such as holes resulted from soil erosion. At present, the Department was working together with a lecturer in the University of Hong Kong for studying ways to develop new speedy tests to detect cracks and holes underground; and

Desalination of Sea Water – the Department had constantly studied the development of sea water desalination technology and would apply the technology to increase fresh water supply when appropriate.

Members were glad that the Department agreed to relocate most of the office units in the Sai Yee Street Sub-office. They hoped that the building would be converted into a traffic interchange which could complement with the railway station to address the problem of traffic congestion in Mong Kok effectively.

Kowloon City District Office

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