

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)817/02-03
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by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

Panel on Home Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 13 December 2002 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon NG Leung-sing, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP

Member Attending : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan

Members Absent : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung

Public Officers : Item IV
Attending

Mr Y T LAM
Acting Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3)

Miss CHOI Suk-kuen
Acting Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Mr Michael MAK
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Libraries and Development)

Item V

Mr Leo KWAN
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Mr John DEAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (7)

Ms Roxana CHENG
Senior Assistant Solicitor General
Department of Justice

Attendance by : Item IV
Invitation

Dr Thomas TANG Sek-khuen
Director
GML Consulting Limited

Dr Jonathan BEARD
General Manager
GHK (Hong Kong) Limited

Item V

Equal Opportunities Commission

Mr LI Siu-kwai
Chief Equal Opportunities Officer

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor

Mr LAW Yuk-kai
Director

Miss Zorian WONG
Researcher

The Indian Resources Group

Mr Ravi GIDUMAL
Director

Hong Kong Against Racial Discrimination

Ms Shalini MAHTANI
Member

Ms Maria FRANCESCH
Member

Clerk in Attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Staff in Attendance : Miss Lolita SHEK
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)7

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)590/02-03]

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2002 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted the following papers issued since the last meeting -

- (a) documents on the study on "The perceptions and experiences of discrimination of people with mental illness in Hong Kong" jointly conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Department of Psychiatry of The Chinese University of Hong

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Kong and the Department of Social Work of the Hong Kong Baptist University [LC Paper No. CB(2)487/02-03(01) to (03)]; and

- (b) paper on "Preservation of historical buildings" provided by the Administration [LC Paper No. CB(2)572/02-03(01)].

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(2)588/02-03]

3. Members noted that the Administration had suggested to brief members on the provision of a second campus for the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts at the regular meeting on 10 January 2003. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the Administration should be requested to submit a paper for circulation to members and the issue would be discussed at a later Panel meeting, if considered necessary.

4. Ms Emily LAU noted that the Administration had issued the outline of topics to be covered in the second report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) for public consultation on 13 November 2002 and the consultation period ended on 13 December 2002. She suggested that deputations should be invited to present their views on the outline of topics at the next meeting on 10 January 2003.

5. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting -

- (a) proposed operational and regulatory framework for authorised soccer betting; and
- (b) second report to be prepared by HKSAR under ICESCR.

On paragraph 5(b) above, members agreed that deputations should be invited to present their views on the second report to be prepared under ICESCR at the next meeting.

6. At the suggestion of Ms Emily LAU, members also agreed that the study on "The perceptions and experiences of discrimination of people with mental illness in Hong Kong" should be included in the list of outstanding items for discussion and discussed by the Panel at a later meeting.

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IV. Consultancy study on the future development of the public libraries
[LC Paper No. CB(2)588/02-03(01)]

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr Thomas TANG, Director of GML Consulting Limited, presented the findings and recommendations of the consultancy study on the future development of the Hong Kong public libraries with the aid of a Powerpoint presentation.

(Post-meeting note : The presentation materials were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)697/02-03(01) on 17 December 2002.)

Funding for public libraries

8. The Deputy Chairman noted that it was recommended in paragraph 4 & 5(e)(vi) of the executive summary that e-commerce functions/purposes could be incorporated into the web portal of public libraries. He asked whether these functions/purposes included advertisements and business transactions. In reply, Dr Thomas TANG clarified that advertisements and corporate sponsorships, which were not allowed on the library website under the existing system, could become possible sources of income for the libraries under the new institutional arrangements recommended by the study. Other sources of income might include donations, charges for services, and commercial franchises within the library facilities.

9. Noting the recommendation on the corporatisation of public libraries in paragraph 8(f)(vi) of the executive summary, the Deputy Chairman sought clarification whether Government subvention would still be provided to the libraries after corporatisation. Dr Thomas TANG informed members that one of the main assumptions in the assessment of the institutional options for public libraries in the study was that Government subvention would still be provided for library services irrespective of the future institutional arrangements. The study had recommended other possible sources of income to supplement funding from Government. Acting Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (D of LCS(Ag)) assured members that similar to the existing arrangements, Government subvention would continue to be provided to libraries on an annual basis in future. Libraries might also apply for funds for special projects in the annual funding allocation exercise, as well as seeking possible private sponsorship.

Institutional arrangements

10. Referring to the options of corporatisation with contracting-out of non-core library services recommended by the consultants in paragraph 8(f)(vi) of the executive summary, the Deputy Chairman opined that to reduce controversies and anxiety from the staff concerned, comprehensive staff consultation should be conducted on the proposed institutional arrangement.

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He requested more information on the staff consultation that would be/had been conducted. He also considered that the Administration should revert to the Panel with the results of any consultation before finalising its recommendations on this issue.

11. Dr Thomas TANG informed members that the consultants had held discussions with staff and had incorporated the latter's comments in the report. D of LCS(Ag) stressed that the Administration had been liaising with staff on a regular basis on the study. She advised that there was not a uniform opinion generated by staff. Some of them acknowledged the fact that public libraries in other countries were run by statutory bodies and hence indicated no strong objection to corporatisation, while others queried the necessity for such a change and were concerned about how their work prospects would be affected. D of LCS(Ag) added that staff were consulted on the general direction of the institutional arrangement only and would continue to be consulted on the report of the study. The Administration would take into consideration the views collected before finalising its recommendations on the future provision of library services. Should the Administration decide to adopt corporatisation as the right direction for public library services, a task force would be set up to examine the institutional option in greater detail. Staff would then be further consulted once details of the institutional arrangements were available. Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Libraries and Development) (AD of LCS(L&D)) supplemented that two briefing sessions on the report of the consultancy study had been arranged for staff on 10 and 18 December 2002. The Administration would continue to liaise with staff on the issue.

12. In response to Ms Emily LAU, D of LCS (Ag) informed members that the cost for the consultancy study was \$1,658,000. She clarified that if the corporatisation model was to be further explored, Government would not be required to pay for additional consultancy services for a further study since this would be conducted by the task force to be set up within the Government.

13. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan queried the intention of the Administration in conducting such a consultancy study when over 80% of the people surveyed were satisfied with the overall facilities and services of public libraries. He considered that the Administration had aimed at corporatising library services so as to cut Government expenditure since the Government employees concerned could then be re-employed on contract terms with a reduction in their salaries and benefits. He also opined that Government would gradually reduce its funding allocation to and hence its responsibilities in the provision of public library services by developing alternative funding sources for the libraries through offering the value added services recommended in paragraph 4 & 5(f) of the executive summary. Mr LEE also considered that the calculations of the efficiency gains for the different institutional options in paragraph 8(f) were not reasonable and hence not acceptable.

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14. Acting Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3) (DS(HA)3(Ag)) explained that since similar studies had not been conducted on the provision of public library services in the past, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, which had only been set up for two years, considered it timely to conduct such a review. He stressed that Government did not have a particular stance on the future development of library services and had not imposed any restrictions on the institutional options examined by the consultants. He reiterated that staff would be consulted on the report of the study before the Administration finalised its recommendations.

15. The Chairman informed members that he had to leave the meeting due to another urgent commitment. The Deputy Chairman then took over the chair at this juncture.

16. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed concern that decisions on the types of books to be included in the collections of the libraries and hence the free exchange of culture and information might be unduly affected by the corporate sponsorships or donations received after corporatisation of library services. He also asked whether there would be any mechanism to ensure that the collections and operation of public libraries would be free from such influence.

17. In reply, D of LCS(Ag) explained that from the experience of existing statutory bodies such as universities which accepted private sponsorships in addition to Government funding, it was not expected that problems would arise from the corporatisation of library services. She assured members that if the corporatisation model was to be adopted, legislation would be introduced to govern the operation of libraries to ensure that they would be run as non-profit making institutions in the interests of the public. Dr Thomas TANG supplemented that public libraries would still need to abide by the guidelines and principles set up by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and follow the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Public Library Manifesto in the provision of library services even after corporatisation. He stressed that general collections in libraries should be determined according to the diversified interests and needs of the community and should be free from the influence of donors. He then quoted the examples of libraries in Toronto and New York to illustrate that members of the public might be able to enjoy wider collections which were made possible through sponsorships and donations in addition to the general collections.

18. In response to Mr WONG Sing-chi, Dr Thomas TANG advised that there were disadvantages of corporatisation. After corporatisation, public libraries would no longer be able to enjoy free supporting services from Government such as legal, accounting and administrative services but would have to pay for them. However, drawing reference to the example of the

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National Library Board of Singapore, he suggested that libraries in Hong Kong might still be overseen by a Government body even after corporatisation so that they would have access to some of the supporting services from Government while the policy objectives of library services would be determined by an independent statutory body.

19. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern that if the Hong Kong Public Library Board proposed in paragraph 9 of the executive summary was to be appointed by Government, it would become a tool of the latter to achieve its political aims, instead of serving the community. He said that he was strongly opposed to such an arrangement. He further pointed out that Government had promised to transfer some of the powers and responsibilities of the former Municipal Councils to the District Councils (DCs) before abolishing the former. However, instead of honouring its pledge, Government had tried to review the provision of different kinds of public services which were part of the functions of the former Municipal Councils. These reviews might result in the restructuring of the existing institutional frameworks, before the comprehensive review of the roles and functions of DCs which Government had promised to conduct after the 2003 DC elections. Mr Albert CHAN opined that a decision on the institutional arrangement for the provision of library services should not be finalised before the comprehensive DC review, and he would object to any such change until completion of the DC review. Ms Emily LAU supported the suggestion of Mr Albert CHAN that the provision of library services should be handed over to DCs.

20. In reply, D of LCS (Ag) explained that the libraries provided a network of service points serving not just the local communities but the whole of Hong Kong. Besides, to be cost effective and to ensure the standard of the services provided, it was necessary to centralise the overall management of library facilities and supporting services. Hence, it might not be appropriate to hand over the management of individual public libraries to DCs. D of LCS (Ag) further informed members that under the existing arrangements, the Administration had reported on the provision of library services to DCs on a regular basis. She said that the Administration would further enhance its communication with DCs and would continue to consult them on changes to existing services and provision of new services.

Value added services

21. Ms Cyd HO considered that the real intent of Government in introducing changes to the existing library services was to reduce Government expenditure and increase income of libraries from other sources. She expressed reservation on offering the value added services such as coffee shops, gift shops or music shops in the libraries as recommended in paragraph 4 & 5(f) of the executive summary as these commercial activities were not relevant to and might even affect the promotion of reading and learning culture in society

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which was the core function of libraries. Ms Cyd HO also expressed concern that members of the public might need to pay for many of the services in the libraries such as access to special collections after corporatisation. She sought clarification on the core and non-core services for which charges would be imposed in future, and the estimated amount the public had to pay for such services in order to support the operation of libraries.

22. Dr Thomas TANG reiterated that Hong Kong public libraries would still abide by the principles of IFLA and the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto and continue to provide free public library services. Drawing from the experience in the development of library services in six other cities, namely Toronto, New York, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore and London, the study had recommended that charges might be introduced to non-core services, if acceptable to members of the public. He pointed out that in these cities, the charges were set at levels which were affordable to the public and constituted 5 to 10% of the total funding of the libraries. Dr Thomas TANG assured members that the study had not recommended to operate libraries with commercial principles but to develop a strategy that would be able to meet the needs of Hong Kong and be consistent with the worldwide trends. As regards the amount that the public would pay for library services after corporatisation, Dr TANG explained that it had to be calculated based on the operating costs of libraries and such information was not available at this stage. He informed members that the study had recommended the establishment of a task force to further examine the corporatisation option. The scope of the task force's brief would include studying the funding of and charges for non-core library services in further detail.

23. Ms Cyd HO said that she was disappointed that such an important piece of information was missing in the report since she understood that the main purpose of the study was to increase library income from other sources. She urged that this should be examined in detail and that the interest of the public should be taken into consideration by the Administration before its decision on corporatisation was finalised.

24. D of LCS (Ag) responded that Government would consult the public on the recommendations of the report before finalising its recommendations on the future provision of library services. She stressed that Government would continue to fund public library services and the purpose of the current study was to determine the strategy for the provision of the services. The Administration would carefully examine the impact on the improvement in the standard of services, the views and concerns of staff, the need for smooth transitional arrangements to prevent disruption to public services, and efficiency gains in determining the institutional options to be adopted.

25. Ms Emily LAU shared the views of Ms Cyd HO. She suggested that the book shops and gift shops to be set up in the libraries should offer goods of

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better quality that reflected the core function and the good image of libraries. Mr Albert CHAN said that he was supportive of introducing value added services to develop other sources of income to supplement public funds for the libraries. However, he considered that such services should reflect the diversified needs of the users and the society.

Guidelines for the planning of public libraries

26. Both Mr Albert CHAN and Ms Emily LAU noted the guidelines for the planning of public libraries proposed in paragraph 4 & 5(b)(iv) of the executive summary. They opined that there was insufficient reading space in existing public libraries and said that they were supportive of the proposal to increase the floor space of libraries. Mr Albert CHAN, however, expressed reservation on whether the floor space ratio recommended in the report was sufficient to meet the needs of the public. He suggested that the floor area should be determined in accordance with the number of people served by individual libraries.

27. In response, Dr Thomas TANG said that the existing libraries were quite constrained in the use of floor space. He explained that the consultancy study had recommended a floor space ratio of 19.3 square meters per 1 000 capita as a planning guideline, which was based on a typical district library of 2 900 square meters serving a population of 150 000, with a view to providing adequate floor area for users of new and existing libraries.

28. In response to a question from Ms Emily LAU, Dr TANG informed members that in terms of the number of libraries per capita, Hong Kong was under-provided as compared with other countries. As at 2000, there were 66 libraries in Hong Kong with a population of 6.7 million, whereas in Sydney, there were 124 libraries with a population of 3.6 million. The number of libraries in New York with a population of 3.3 million was 206 and that for London was 402 with a population of 7.2 million. Dr TANG added that the number of libraries in Hong Kong had increased to 69 as of December 2002.

(Post-meeting note : The New York Public Library System studied in the consultancy serves Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island not Brooklyn and Queens. The number of libraries is therefore much smaller than 206 and should be 85.)

29. Noting the low ratio of public libraries per capita in Hong Kong as compared with other countries, Ms Emily LAU remarked that to further improve the provision of library services to the public, Government should examine the circumstances leading to the low number and introduce improvement measures instead of trying to corporatise public libraries. She requested the Administration to provide information on the comparison of the

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library services in Hong Kong with those in overseas countries. Mr WONG Yung-kan expressed support for Ms LAU's request.

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30. In response, D of LCS(Ag) explained that the provision of libraries, depended on a number of factors. She pointed out that in view of the small area and the dense and highly centralised population of Hong Kong, public libraries were easily accessible to members of the public. In planning additional district libraries for new towns, the Administration had adopted the standard of 2 900m² in order to provide more spaces and a wider range of facilities to meet the needs of the public. The consultancy study had therefore recommended to concentrate efforts on the improvement in the quality of library services although it had also recommended the provision of small and mobile libraries in densely populated areas. At the request of the Deputy Chairman, the Administration undertook to provide an information paper on the comparison of the library services in Hong Kong with those in overseas countries examined by the consultants.

Way forward

31. Mr WONG Yung-kan suggested that the Administration should consult DCs at their meetings on the study report. Ms Emily LAU requested that this subject should be included in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion and that the Administration should revert to the Panel with the results of public consultation. D of LCS (Ag) advised members that a public consultation forum for the study had been scheduled for 14 December 2002. The public consultation period would last until 31 March 2003. She assured members that the Administration would consult DCs on the report. To conclude, the Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to consider the views of members and revert to the Panel before finalising its recommendations on the future provision of library services.

V. Preparation of the second report of HKSAR under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), position of submission of the initial report of HKSAR under the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) and preparation of other reports under human rights treaties for submission to the United Nations (UN)

Meeting with deputations

32. The Deputy Chairman welcomed representatives of deputations to the meeting. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, the deputations presented their views on the preparation of reports under human rights treaties by HKSAR for submission to UN as summarised in paragraphs 33 to 36 below.

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Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)588/02-03(03)]

33. Mr LI Siu-kwai, Chief Equal Opportunities Officer of EOC informed members that the Commission had provided statistics on the racial discrimination enquiries it had received from 20 September 1996 to 30 November 2002 for members' reference. Mr LI explained that as many enquirers had not followed up on their enquiries once they knew that the subject was not under the purview of EOC, the statistics might not reflect the actual situation in the society. Mr LI Siu-kwai continued to point out that although the Hong Kong Bill of Rights contains a provision against acts of racial discrimination, the provision only applied to the public sector whereas the private sector was not regulated. EOC therefore considered that legislation should be introduced to eliminate racial discrimination in the private sector as well. As regards the preparation of reports under international human rights treaties by HKSAR, Mr LI said that EOC requested that ample time should be allowed for public consultation on the draft reports. A mechanism should also be established to monitor the implementation of the covenants and conventions in Hong Kong. Government should also report the progress to the Legislative Council (LegCo), non-Government organisations (NGOs) and the public.

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor
[LC Paper No. CB(2)697/02-03(02)]

34. Mr LAW Yuk-kai, Director of Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor informed members that the organisation was very concerned whether HKSAR was able to submit its reports to UN under international human rights treaties on time after the return of its sovereignty to China. He quoted the reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, CRC and ICERD as examples to illustrate that although Hong Kong had submitted its reports to the Central People's Government (CPG) on time, the reports had only been submitted after the deadlines or not yet been submitted to UN by China. Mr LAW said that to ensure that its reports would be submitted to UN on time in future, HKSAR should explore with CPG and UN whether its reports could be submitted by China separately as part of China's reports to UN in case the China reports would not be submitted on time.

The Indian Resources Group
[LC Paper No. CB(2)670/02-03(01)]

35. Mr Ravi GIDUMAL, Director of the Indian Resources Group introduced to members the joint submission from the Group and Hong Kong Against Racial Discrimination. He remarked that it was the international obligation of HKSAR under ICERD to eliminate racial discrimination in Hong

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Kong. Despite the protection against racial discrimination in the public sector provided by the Bill of Rights, victims found it extremely difficult to bring a case against Government under the law. The Group therefore considered that Government should introduce legislation which was the only effective means to prohibit racial discrimination. However, it was disappointing that Government had tried to evade its obligation and avoid legislation. The Indian Resources Group urged Government to implement ICERD and introduce legislation against racial discrimination in the private sector as soon as possible.

Hong Kong Against Racial Discrimination
[LC Paper No. CB(2)670/02-03(01)]

36. Ms Shalini MAHTANI, member of Hong Kong Against Racial Discrimination continued to brief members on joint submission from the organisation and the Indian Resources Group. She pointed out that a recent survey conducted by HKSAR revealed support from the business community in Hong Kong for legislation against racial discrimination. There seemed to be little objection towards legislation to prohibit racism. She urged the Administration to introduce legislation which was the only means to achieve equal opportunities for the minorities in Hong Kong. Ms MAHTANI also pointed out that the Race Relations Unit set up under the Home Affairs Bureau had no enforcement powers or independence and hence might not be effective in prohibiting racial discrimination. She suggested that Government should expand the mandate of EOC to include racial discrimination as the Commission could provide legal recourse and substantive assistance to the victims.

Response from the Administration

Public consultation on reports to be submitted by HKSAR to UN under international human rights treaties

37. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1) (DS(HA)1) responded to the concerns raised by the deputations. He explained that the Administration would normally consult the public and NGOs on the broad outline of the reports to be prepared by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) under international human rights treaties for submission to UN. He said that this was a very advanced arrangement among other state parties and had been praised by UN. Moreover, all the submissions received would be forwarded to UN by HKSARG. To address the concern of deputations whether ample time was allowed for the public to comment on the outline, DS(HA)1 assured members that the consultation periods could usually be extended, if necessary.

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Submission of reports under international human rights treaties to UN

38. On the preparation of reports to be submitted to UN under international human rights treaties, DS(HA)1 advised that HKSARG would initiate the drafting process of the reports when the CPG called for Hong Kong's contribution to China's metropolitan reports, of which the reports from Hong Kong would form a part. Hong Kong was not, and could not be, a state party to these treaties because it was not a sovereign state and the treaties applied to Hong Kong by extension of China's ratifications. There was therefore no question of Hong Kong submitting reports in its own right. This had been affirmed by the Chair and Rapporteur of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) during their recent visit to Hong Kong, when they unequivocally stated that CERD would not accept direct reports from HKSAR. From the experience in the past five years, DS(HA)1 said that he did not see any particular problems in the submission of reports to UN. He added that the drafting requirements of such reports were often complicated which meant that the drafting process took longer and made timely submission difficult. He said that submissions from most state parties were usually late and China had one of the better records in that regard.

Monitoring the implementation of human rights treaties

39. DS(HA)1 explained that many organisations such as EOC and Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data were involved in the protection of human rights in Hong Kong. Hong Kong had an independent Judiciary and rule of law. LegCo and an active press also monitored the work of Government in this respect. He said that Government was open minded to suggestions to further facilitate the protection of human rights in Hong Kong including the establishment of a Human Rights Commission.

Legislation against racial discrimination

40. DS(HA)1 assured members that Secretary for Home Affairs had attached great importance to the issue of introducing legislation against racial discrimination. He had met with many concern groups and organisations to discuss the issue. DS(HA)1 said that Government had not reached a decision yet and would require more time to study this controversial issue.

Meeting with the Administration

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)588/02-03(02) and (04)]

41. Ms Emily LAU pointed out that under ICERD and ICESCR, HKSAR was required to fulfill its international obligation by legislating against racial discrimination. Both Ms LAU and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that Government should introduce legislation as the business community had indicated its support and there seemed little objection from the rest of the

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society. DS(HA)1 assured members that Government had not yet taken a decision on the issue since more time was required to study the issue thoroughly, not because of objection from the society.

42. Ms Cyd HO remarked that Government had not encouraged NGOs' participation in the implementation of the human rights treaties by subsidising activities of NGOs. In reply, DS(HA)1 advised that sponsorships were provided by Government for activities organised by NGOs for the promotion of human rights and equal opportunities for the minorities.

43. In response to the question from Ms Emily LAU whether HKSAR should remind CPG of the deadlines for submitting reports to UN under human rights treaties, DS(HA)1 said that HKSAR had all along liaised with CPG regularly on this issue.

VI. Any other business

44. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 January 2003