Meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Forum

23 May 2018 at 3:00 p.m.

30/F Conference Room, Southorn Centre, Wan Chai

**Present**

**Government representatives**

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| Assistant Director of Home Affairs (3) | Mr Howard Yam  (Chairman) |
| Chief Executive Officer (3),  Home Affairs Department | Mr KY Cheng |
| Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs(5)A | Ms Cathy Li |

**Representatives of public bodies**

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| Senior Equal Opportunities Officer,  Equal Opportunities Commission | Mr Raymond Ho |

**Representatives of non-government organisations**

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| Caritas – Hong Kong | Ms Celine Chan |
| Christian Action | Mr Gary Tang |
| Federation of Muslim Association in Hong Kong | Mr Khan Muhammad Malik |
| Hong Kong Christian Service | Mr Mike Cheung |
| Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society Limited | Mr Durga Bahadur Gurung |
| Hong Kong Nepalese Federation | Ms Rita Gurung |
| Hong Kong SKH Lady MacLehose Centre | Mr Chan Ching Wa |
| Human Welfare Services | Mr Qaim Khani Shakeel Ahmed |
| India Association Hong Kong | Mr Mohan Chugani |
| Indian Businessmen’s Association | Mr Gul T Mirpuri |
| International Social Service Hong Kong Branch | Mr Deepen Thapa |
| Justice Centre Hong Kong | Ms Annie Li |
| Khalsa Diwan Hong Kong (Sikh Temple) | Mr Daljit Singh |
| New Home Association | Mr Chan Yee Fei |
| Pakistan Islamic Welfare Union Inc. HK | Mr Mohammad Liaqat |
| The Hong Kong Council of Social Service | Ms Lynn Law |
| The Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon | Ms Tsoi Man Yu |
| The Zubin Foundation | Ms Gunjali Singh |
| United Muslim Association of Hong Kong | Mr SJ Raghbi |
| Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service | Ms Tina Yim |
| Yuen Long Town Hall | Ms Ruth Kong |

**Other attendees**

*For Agenda Item 1*

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| Chairman, Task Force on Land Supply | Mr Stanley Wong |
| Vice-chairman, Task Force on Land Supply | Ir Dr Greg Wong |
| Member, Task Force on Land Supply | Ms Iris Hoi |
| Member, Task Force on Land Supply | Dr Eunice Mak |

*For Agenda Item 2*

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| Senior Housing Manager/Non-domestic (Headquarters), Housing Department | Ms Ling Kuk Yi |
| Chief Leisure Manager (Land-based Venues), Leisure and Cultural Services Department | Mr Horman Chan |
| Senior Executive Officer (Community Halls & Establishment), Home Affairs Department | Ms Shirley Yeung |

*For Any Other Business*

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| Deputy Regional Officer, ICAC Regional Office (New Territories North West) | Mr Franklin Chiu |
| Senior Community Relations Officer, ICAC Regional Office (New Territories North West) | Ms Larissa Chow |

**Secretary**

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| Senior Executive Officer (RRU),  Home Affairs Department | Mr Alfred Shum |

1. **Introduction**
   1. The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting.
2. **Public engagement on land supply**
   1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Stanley Wong, Chairman of the Task Force on Land Supply (the Task Force) gave a presentation to attendees on the public engagement on land supply.
   2. Issues raised by attendees and the discussions were summarised below:
      1. An attendee enquired about the stock of vacant residential flats held by developers, which would affect housing supply. Mr Wong replied that the Task Force noted that the vacancy rate of private domestic properties was about 3.7%, which was much lower than the long-term average vacancy rate of 5.0% from 1996 to 2015. In response to the attendee’ suggestion of imposing tax on vacant flats, Mr Wong said that this was outside the scope of the Task Force’s study. Nevertheless, he pointed out that while there were suggestions that there were some 200 000 “surplus” housing units in Hong Kong after deducting the number of households from the number of housing stock, some of the so-called “surplus” housing units were actually occupied for use as quarters or second flats of certain households.
      2. An attendee sought clarifications as to which set of population projection figures was used as the basis for assessing the land demand and whether foreign domestic helpers were included in the calculations. Mr Wong replied that the Task Force’s assessment was based on the Government’s latest population and domestic household projection, i.e. the population would reach the peak of 8.22 million in 2043 and the average household size would decrease to 2.7 persons by 2051. Due to the temporary nature of their employment contracts, foreign domestic helpers were not included in the calculations of land requirement for housing.
      3. An attendee suggested the Task Force should bear in mind that green areas are as important as land for housing in a society. Mr Wong replied that the objective of the Task Force was to resolve land supply shortage but would also consider enhancement of the overall living environment such as accessibility, open space for public enjoyment, etc. through increasing supply of land for the provision of transport infrastructures, open space and community facilities. In response to the attendee’s suggestion that consideration should be given to redeveloping aged public rental housing estates, Mr Wong said the Hong Kong Housing Authority had an on-going programme to redevelop old housing estates. However, there was still a need to identify decanting sites to rehouse existing tenants. He added that this was a lengthy process and it could take as long as 18 years to redevelop a housing estate.
      4. An attendee asked whether priority would be given to using the land so formed under various options for the benefits of the needy such as building schools or elderly homes. Mr Wong replied that whilst the Task Force was unable to match the potential land supply with land uses because there were yet details on the community’s preference on the land supply options and the potential sites, it remained crucial to first increase the land supply to make possible the enhancement of welfare or educational facilities in future.
      5. In response to an attendee’s enquiry on developing outlying islands, Mr Wong said that the Task Force considered the reclamation of five near-shore site more viable because of the higher yield and fewer environmental concerns.
      6. An attendee commented that there was a strong need for more housing land because many people from the ethnic minority communities had been waiting for public housing for a long time.
      7. An attendee commented that many grass root and underprivileged groups had very poor living condition and unfair distribution of land supply was a problem. She was doubtful whether sacrificing recreational land by the public would eventually bring benefit to the underprivileged or the rich. Mr Wong replied that the Task Force was established to resolve the land shortage problem and strive for the best and wider interest of the society as a whole.
   3. The Chairman remarked that the consultation was on-going, ending on 26 September 2018, and there were ample opportunities to express views on the subject matter to the Task Force.
3. **Provision of venues for ethnic minorities to conduct community activities**
   1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms Ling Kuk Yi of the Housing Department (HD), Mr Horman Chan of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and Ms Shirley Yeung of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) gave presentations to attendees on the application criteria and procedures for sites and venues under their management.
   2. Issues raised by attendees and the discussions were summarised below:
      1. An attendee said that consideration should be given to relocating HAD-sponsored support service centres for ethnic minorities to public housing estates for easier access by ethnic minority users. Ms Ling replied that lists of vacant premises would be regularly posted onto the Hong Kong Housing Authority website and interested non-government organisations (NGOs) were welcome to apply. HD would consider the applications received having regard to the comments sought from the relevant government bureaux/departments. For welfare facilities in new public housing estates, HD would collaborate with relevant bureaux/departments, in particularly Social Welfare Department (SWD), during the planning stage. For Government-funded welfare premises in public housing estates, SWD or the Government departments/bureaux concerned will select the appropriate NGOs to operate the planned services.
      2. An attendee noted that LCSD had converted some playgrounds into dual-purpose venues, i.e. for playing cricket in addition to its original use. He enquired whether LCSD would consider converting more playgrounds in view of the increasing popularity of cricket in Hong Kong. Mr Chan replied that LCSD would consider opening up more venues having regard to community needs, technical feasibility, user safety and comments from District Councils. He added that organisations could also make suggestions of suitable venues to district offices of LCSD. On the other hand, an attendee pointed out that these dual-purpose venues could only be booked by organisations so she suggested that LCSD should consider opening up some time slots for individuals to play in the venues.
      3. An attendee said some ethnic minorities were looking for inexpensive venues for engagements and marriages. He asked whether community halls could be used for this purpose and whether soft drinks could be served during these events. Ms Yeung pointed out that eating, smoking, lighting of fire or cooking were prohibited in community halls. However, drinking was permitted so long as the venue was kept clean.
      4. An attendee commented that the Nepalese community relied on the use of community halls because they did not have their own club house. However, the equipment in community halls was not kept in good condition and the regulations were too strict. It resulted in her organisation being banned from booking of facilities for six months. Ms Yeung said that District Offices was responsible for the day-to-day management of the community halls and objections against penalties imposed under the Demerit Points System should be addressed to the District Office concerned within the prescribed period.
      5. Mr Raymond Ho of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) asked LCSD to look into the issue that some ethnic minorities could not understand communications issued in Chinese, such as reply letters to applicants and activity programmes posted on notice boards in sport centres.
4. **Any Other Business**
   1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Franklin Chiu of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) briefed attendees on the work of the ICAC and anti-corruption education resources available to the ethnic minority communities. The Chairman invited attendees to assist in disseminating anti-corruption messages to their communities.
   2. An attendee enquired about a specific case concerning the handling of unclaimed remains of a Pakistani who passed away in 2002. The Chairman advised the attendee to provide further details in writing so that the enquiry could be referred to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.
   3. An attendee enquired about the $500 million funding earmarked to strengthen support for ethnic minorities in 2018-19 Budget and the progress in setting up a Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration. The Chairman replied that the Office of the Chief Secretary for Administration would organise two consultation sessions to collect views from ethnic minority organisations and organisations serving ethnic minorities on the use of the fund. In response to the suggestion of discussing the way forward in this Forum, the Chairman replied that in line with existing practice, the bureaux/department responsible for administering the fund could be invited to give a briefing to the meeting and receive feedback in due course.
   4. For the date of next meeting, attendees would be duly informed nearer the time.

**Home Affairs Department**

**June 2018**