Visiting Mainland experts exchange views on EIA for Kau Yi Chau reclamation in Hong Kong (with photos)

The Development Bureau, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, and the Planning Department held an expert meeting today (July 11) to exchange views with a delegation of top environmental and ecological experts from the Mainland on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) study for the proposed reclamation works of the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands (KYCAI) while the related EIA enters the final stage.

Members of the delegation included academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, Director of the State Key Laboratory of Environmental Criteria and Risk Assessment, Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, Mr Wu Fengchang; the former Director of the Third Institute of Oceanography of the State Oceanic Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources, Dr Yu Xingguang; and the former Director of the National Marine Environmental Monitoring Center of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, Dr Guan Daoming.

The Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, thanked the Mainland experts for visiting Hong Kong to exchange views and offer guidance on the EIA study on the reclamation for the KYCAI. She said that KYCAI is a development project with strategic significance. With the provision of 1 000 hectares of new land in the long term and a strategic location, KYCAI will create a strong impetus for Hong Kong's development into a quality city. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is committed to conducting the EIA study with high standards, so as to promote high-quality development in support of the national initiative of building ecological civilisation. The project team conducted fact-based, comprehensive ecological surveys, which evaluated the environmental impacts and recommended suitable mitigation measures, with a scientific approach. The EIA report, currently being prepared, will be elevated to a higher level in terms of environmental quality with the guidance of various experts.

At the meeting, the experts conducted an in-depth discussion on various environmental and ecological issues, including hydrodynamics and water quality as well as ecology and fishery industry. Although climate change is not covered in the scope of the statutory EIA as it will not be intensified by reclamation works, the climate resilience of the artificial islands has been raised for discussion at the meeting since it is an issue of public concern. On the whole, the experts opined that the EIA report on the reclamation of the KYCAI has balanced the needs of development and conservation. The EIA covers various areas, which is reasonably scientific, with novel environmental mitigation measures employed. With a stringent approval mechanism, the project exemplifies the initiative of building ecological civilisation.

Ms Linn said that the experts gave positive comments and valuable views on the EIA report, which further strengthened its scientific analysis and basis of validation, and assisted the project team in enhancing the EIA report. The project team strives to submit the EIA report within this year to formally launch the statutory EIA process.

Also joining the meeting were members from the Independent Expert Panel and the Study Team's Professional Advisors on the KYCAI, including the President of the Macau University of Science and Technology, Professor Joseph Lee; Chair Professor of the School of Science and Technology of the Hong Kong Metropolitan University Professor Nora Tam; the Associate Head of Department of Biology of Hong Kong Baptist University, Professor Qiu Jianwen; and the founder of the Eco Institute, Mr Samson So.

The meeting was held at Tung Chung Community Liaison Centre in the afternoon. In the morning, the delegation visited the City Gallery in Central to learn about Hong Kong's overall urban planning. The delegation then took a boat trip to inspect the ecological environment in the vicinity of Kau Yi Chau and learn about the achievements of the reclamation project in Tung Chung.