

URBAN PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW QUARTERLY
(Published since May 1992)

簡家驄律師行 · 城規環保季刊

The world’s attention to climate change was re-focused by the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris from 30 November to 12 December 2015. We consider aspects of the Conference in this edition.

The Editors

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Paris Summit Continues World Leaders’ Tepid Approach To Climate Change

Lead up to the summit

From 30 November to 12 December 2015 Paris (France) hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) as the 11th session of the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the 21st annual session of the Conference of the Parties to the 1992 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

Representatives from 196 nations attended the summit, which was held over two weeks. Their object in meeting and negotiating over such a relatively long period was to reach and proclaim a global agreement on measures to be taken by each country to collectively reduce the rate and impact of climate change so that the inevitable rise in average global temperatures is limited to 2°C by the year 2100.

Participants ranged from the world’s two biggest economies (and greenhouse gas emitters), U.S.A. and China, to small island countries such as Kirabati (land area of 800 K²) and Tuvalu (26 K²). Between them, U.S.A. and China have a population of approximately 1.5 billion, whilst Tuvalu’s population is a mere 11,000 and Kirabati is home to only 103,000 people.

France was chosen as the host country for COP21 because it is something of a model country in combating climate change, as it is one of a handful of developed countries to have substantially reduced carbon emissions from electricity generation. Today, 90% of France’s electricity comes from sources with zero carbon emissions. These include hydro-power, wind generation and, the much less meritorious, nuclear power.

Prior to COP21, national representatives met at a number of venues and times to attempt to negotiate at least a framework draft emissions reduction agreement to place before the world’s representatives at the Paris summit. Critically, it was agreed at COP17 that any future agreement would have the core objective of limiting to 2°C the increase in global temperatures by the year 2100. To this end, by 2015, 146 countries had pledged to implement published measure, to reduce their carbon footprint, known as the *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions* (INDCs). However, the INDCs – if fully implemented – would limit global warming to only 2.7°C by 2100.

At the 21012 Doha Climate Conference, the U.N. Climate Change Commissioner, Christiana Figueres, warned that the “current pledges under the second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol are not enough to guarantee that the temperature increase will stay below 2°C, and there is an ever increasing gap between the action of countries and what the science tells us”.

The last pre-summit meeting of climate change delegates took place in Bonn, Germany, from 19 to 23 October 2015, when the final detailed draft agreement was agreed. This followed years of wrangling and hard-bargaining, principally between the opposing blocs of developed and undeveloped nations.

In the lead-up to COP21 numerous NGOs, government agencies, indigenous communities and business groups published wish lists or programme proposals, with a view to influencing any agreement to be adopted at the summit.

For example, *Women's Earth and Climate Action Network* sought “powerful submissions by worldwide women sharing stories, struggles, solutions and action plans” to create “women’s climate justice mobilisation”. An association of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (PPEGSA) released a draft plan designed to protect Mediterranean communities from damage likely otherwise to result from rising sea levels. According to PPEGSA an estimated 500 million people, 15,000 islands and tens of thousands of kilometers of coastline need protective measures implemented to avoid massive damage and destruction from increased flooding which is expected as global temperatures increase, causing polar ice melt-down.

An alliance of countries rich in solar resources (i.e. having areas of prolonged sunlight) was proposed by India and France. The International Agency for Solar Policy and Application would promote and regulate solar generated power like OPEC does for oil-based fuels.

Global warming

There is overwhelming evidence, supported by informed scientific consensus, that anthropocentric activities since at least the industrial revolution are causing a trend of higher than natural temperature increases globally. The single, main cause is the excessive release of carbon dioxide, which in turn is largely due to using fossil fuels (e.g. oil and coal) to generate electricity and to power motor vehicles. In 2010 over 91% of energy worldwide was derived from fossil fuels or other carbon-emitting methods.

Other greenhouse gases also contribute to the growing umbrella of gases in the atmosphere, which trap and retain heat closer to the earth’s surface than otherwise would be the case, thus causing an unnatural increase in average global temperatures.

Competing interests

Ever since the Kyoto Protocol (1997), which was the first international agreement designed to limit greenhouse gas emissions and, thereby, global warming, the key obstacle to the creation of effective measures to combat global warming has been the different positions of developed countries (DCs) and undeveloped countries (UDCs).

In short, UDCs have maintained that the DCs have been the major cause of post-industrial revolution emissions and warming. In this 100+ years period, DCs have, in effect, enriched themselves at the expense of the health and stability of the world’s climate (and, of course, their own and the world’s ecosystems). The UDCs argue that they should bear less responsibility for decarbonising the world, and that DCs must make the running and pay huge subsidies to UDCs to implement less harmful power generation methods, and other emissions – reduction measures. So the UDCs have, generally, had less resolve in reducing their dependence on fossil fuels, or introducing greenhouse gas emissions reductions, compared with the DCs.

However, in the several years prior to COP21 a substantial grouping of UDCs, namely small island and poor coastal states, has been alarmed by the prospect of being swamped by rising sea levels. Some are even staring at complete annihilation should sea levels rise above a metre, as scientists predict if global temperatures increase is not kept below 2°C by 2100. These states have therefore become proponents of strong global warming measures. However, they, and UDCs generally, still insist that DCs must carry the main financial burden of combating global warming.

Another factor in changing the UDCs v. DCs scenario is that a number of nations previously characterised as UDCs and low carbon emitters, are now developed or semi-developed countries and are also substantial emitters of greenhouse gases. For example, China is both the second largest economy and largest source of greenhouse gases in the World; India is the third largest greenhouse gas source; South Korea is now a DC and also a substantial greenhouse gas emitter.

Thus the previously wide gap between DCs and UDCs had narrowed by the time of COP21.

The Paris Agreement

COP21 resulted in the Paris Agreement, which surprisingly was signed by all 196 nations represented at the summit, including OPEC countries, which have traditionally fought to retain fossil fuels as the predominant source of the world’s energy.

The Agreement was a further step within the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* to implement measures from 2020 for reducing the World’s carbon dioxide emissions. The Agreement has, therefore, the function of realising the objectives of the Convention:

- (1) to limit any increase in global temperatures to 2°C above pre-industrial levels by year 2100;
- (2) increasing all nations’ capacities to adapt to inevitable consequences of global warming, especially in adapting food production methods to changed climatic conditions;
- (3) encouraging flow of capital to foster alternative, renewable energy sources so as to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Agreement comprises nearly 17000 words in 29 Articles covering the major decisions reached at COP21, mainly dealing with climate change mitigation measures, monitoring and transparency mechanisms, and financial arrangements to fund the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and other mitigation programmes in the poorer countries. [We shall not attempt to detail the measures here]

In essence, the Agreement formalises adoption of the INDCs. Each signatory is required to implement its INDC as a binding undertaking to all other nations, so that all INDCs (now, NDCs following the Agreement) collectively become the world’s programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the unqualified objective of limiting global temperature increase to 2°C by 2100.

At the insistence of small island states (especially), the Agreement includes a provision requiring nations to strive to reduce the temperature rise to 1.5°C, as most experts predict that a 2°C increase will not be enough to save very low-lying countries from inundation.

The overall commitment made by members of the Agreement is to reduce their carbon emissions “as soon as possible” and to do what they reasonably can to ensure the global temperature increase is limited to 2°C by 2021. The financial commitment by DCs to assist the UDCs is to provide funding of US\$100 billion per annum.

Will the Agreement make a difference?

The short answer to this key question is: probably yes, but not nearly enough of a difference to avoid adverse environmental and economic consequences of global warming.

On the positive side the Agreement:

- recognises that climate change “represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet”
- acknowledges that climate change is a common concern of humankind
- binds members to uphold and promote regional and international cooperation to promote “more ambitious climate action”

- sidelines (in the global warming debate) staunch anti-environment and anti-climate change political parties in democratic countries, such as the Republicans (U.S.A.), Conservatives (Canada) and Liberal-NP Coalition (Australia)
- will encourage groups “across every sector of society” to begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution (according to AI Core)

On the negative side:

- the Agreement is not a fact until it is signed, which will be from April 2016
- the Agreement does not come into force unless and until ratified by 55 countries producing at least 55% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions
- many countries might not ratify the Agreement (e.g. the Republicans might prevent ratification by the U.S.A.)
- most significantly, there are no objective monitoring or enforcement measures laid down
- commitments by members are merely “promises to do better” rather than binding obligations

Conclusion

The Agreement is unlikely to reverse global warming so as to restrict global temperature increase to 2°C by 2021, let alone the preferred 1.5°C, maximum increase if low-lying countries are to avoid inundation from a rise in sea levels.

Generally speaking, member states were simply unwilling to commit to the drastic changes in their electricity and energy generation that is required to decarbonise the atmosphere at a sufficient level to slow-down global temperature increases to the required level. This weak approach, combined with the absence of sanctions for nations which fail to adhere to – or improve – their NDCs, renders the Agreement more like a “motherhood” statement of good intent, rather than a mechanism for reversing current global warming trends.

Commissioner Figueres herself dismissed the Agreement as a document representing members’ economic self-interest, containing no real measures or future action pledges intended to help “save the planet”. Regrettably, the Commissioner’s assessment appears to be all too accurate.

TOWN PLANNING

Draft Tai Po Outline Zoning Plan (“OZP”) approved

The draft Tai Po OZP was approved on 16 October 2015.

The planning scheme area of about 2,438 hectares is located in the central part of North East New Territories.

In view of the pressing needs for housing land supply and the youth hostel scheme, about 108.5 hectares, 29.4 hectares, 141 hectares and 0.7 hectare are zoned “Residential (Group A)”, “Residential (Group B)”, “Residential (Group C)” and “Residential (Group D)” respectively for private and public housing developments.

In hope of conserving certain features of special scientific interests, about 43.5 hectares covering Fung Yuen and the Tai Po Egrettry are zoned “Site of Special Scientific Interest” (“SSSI”). To the same end, another 75.5 hectares, including the Tolo Pond Mangrove, are zoned “Conservation Area”. Additionally, about 1,264.8 hectares covering mainly hill slopes and wooded knolls are zoned “Green Belt” to define the limits of urban and sub-urban development area.

To recognise the existing villages, provide land suitable for village expansion, and compensate for village houses affected by government projects, some 150.4 hectares are zoned “Village Type Development”.

Recognising the needs of the locals, a total of 175.9 hectares is zoned “G/IC” to provide a wide range of G/IC facilities. Moreover, some 65.8 hectares is zoned “Open Space” to provide land for active and passive recreational activities.

[Town Planning Board Press Release, 18/09/2015]

Draft Shap Sz Heung OZP approved

The draft Shap Sz Heung OZP was approved on 16 October 2015.

The OZP covers about 289 hectares and is bounded by Sai Kung West Country Park in the southeast, the lower slopes of Ma On Shan in the west, and Ma On Shan Country Park in the south.

To conserve and protect the features of special scientific interest and to deter human developments, two sites of about 57.36 hectares are zoned “SSSI”. Both sites display excellent exposure of folded and faulted sedimentary rocks, mangal communities, and mudflats. Similarly, to retain the sensitive ecological and topographical features of another site, another 56.67 hectares is zoned “Conservation Area”. To the same end, 5.42 hectares is zoned “Coastal Protection Area”. A further 47.32 hectares is zoned “Green Belt”.

Well aware of the developmental needs, about 64.48 hectares is zoned “Comprehensive Development Area” near Che Ha, Tseng Tau, and Tai Tung Wo Liu Villages. These sites are to be developed in a comprehensive manner by integrating recreational development with residential elements.

[Town Planning Board Press Release, 16/10/2015]

Draft Cha Kwo Ling, Yau Tong, Lei Yue Mun OZP approved

The draft Cha Kwo Ling, Yau Tong, Lei Yue Mun OZP was approved on 16 November 2015.

The planning scheme area is located in East Kowloon within the Kwun Tong District and covers about 264 hectares.

The master plan is to phase out existing industrial uses through redevelopment for residential use. In this respect, five sites totalling about 5.79 hectares in Yau Tong Industrial Area (“YTIA”) are zoned “Residential (Group E)”. Another 13.93 hectares are zoned “Comprehensive Development Area” for comprehensive residential and/or commercial development.

To conserve the lighthouse, the natural coastlines and the coastal natural environment, about 0.07 hectare is zoned “Coastal Protection Area”. Another 59.28 hectares is zoned “Green Belt” to preserve existing hill slopes.

In recognition of existing residential developments and villages, about 87 hectares is zoned “Residential” or “Village Type Development”.

To serve the needs of residents in the area and adjoining areas, about 19.21 hectares is zoned "Government, Institution or Community" to provide land for various government, institution and community facilities.

In anticipation of developing district open space and a waterfront promenade linking to the promenade in the South East Kowloon Area, about 18.96 hectares is zoned "Open Space" for both active and passive recreational uses.

[Town Planning Board Press Release, 16/11/2015]

Staying on track: Hong Kong TPB rejects "laughable" proposal to remove trams

The proposal to remove trams in the Central District OZP by a retired planner was announced in August and triggered public outrage. He viewed the tram as a "historical problem" that has to be reviewed. He claimed the road space taken by trams could allow more car parks to be built along Des Voeux Road to accommodate the cars that clog the streets.

If successful, the proposal would have amended the Approved Central District OZP and eliminate mentioning 'tram' in its contents.

Since then, the Town Planning Board ("TPB") has received a total of 22,385 public submissions, of which 98 percent were against the proposal.

Today, TPB planners queried whether the proposal had enough evidence to support its claims. The retire planner admitted the proposal is only half a page long, and he did not do any assessment to back up his suggestion. Consequently, the proposal was rejected.

After making the decision, a TPB planner reiterated the trams are not the main cause of traffic congestion and remained essential as they offer some 180,000 rides daily. He described the tram system as environmentally-friendly, affordable and convenient. He further commented the trams could not be replaced by the MTR, as passengers would take other road transportation, thus compounding the ongoing traffic congestion issues.

[South China Morning Post, 16/11/2015]

Opposition from residents fails: Hong Kong TPB allows owner of old European home to build on nearby site

A piece of green belt next to Aberdeen Country Park will be sacrificed to make way for a luxury house after the TPB today voted in favour of rezoning the belt for a controversial land swap to preserve a 128-year-old European house near the Peak.

Located at 23 Coombe Road, Carrick is a grade one historic building initially set to be demolished for a luxury residence. The owner, Juli May, suspended the demolition plan after the government offered a land swap to save the house.

The proposal was met with over 1,600 objections from nearby residents and community activists with stake in the green belt, who put forward a counterproposal with two options. The first one would allow the owner to build right next to Carrick. The second would give the owner the choice of building on another piece of green belt further away from the country park.

The TPB rejected both options for not demonstrated to be technically feasible and that the ambience of Carrick should be preserved as completely as possible without adding a new structure next to it. The TPB viewed a balance between heritage conservation and the trees had to be made, while the economic incentives to be given to the owner had to be reasonable.

A representative of the owner stressed the company has no plans in destroying the entire green belt buffer, and has only taken a very small proportion of the green belt.

[South China Morning Post, 06/11/2015]

Fantasy or reality? Hong Kong planners question government's vision of iconic 'tourism node' at former Kai Tak airport

First mentioned in the 2013 policy address, Kai Tak Fantasy, the plan to redevelop the former airport site was brought to the TPB for discussion today.

TPB members have raised fears the project will become "just another property project" and encounter similar struggles to those seen by the controversial West Kowloon Cultural District.

One member expressed concern as to the lack of focus of the current proposal. Owing to the lack of focus, he envisioned the project may end up as just like any other property projects with hotels and a big shopping mall.

Another member was anxious about the attractiveness of the proposal as he recalled the government was over-optimistic about the estimated visitors of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal Project. In reply, a government official stated the number of people using the cruise terminal had been increasing steadily and the government would improve transport connections for those looking to commute there.

Other members were troubled by the risk of the project becoming "a repeat of West Kowloon Cultural District" because, as with the long-delayed arts hub, the government was striving to combine commercial viability and a social mission.

[South China Morning Post, 16/10/2015]

WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT

The 47th Board Meeting of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCD")

The CEO of WKCD in his report to the Board Members indicated the WKCD is very conscious about engaging the community and instil a sense of ownership for the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD").

The CEO reported the Freespace Happening series featuring different programmes each month, including an immersive theatre performance in September, outdoor film screenings in October and a concert by the Brass Ensemble of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra in November, have been well received by the public. Similarly, two outreach programmes for students, namely M+ Rover and the Culture Mixer Programme were timetabled to give students the

opportunity of dialogue with artists, arts administrators and creative entrepreneurs. Further, the Xiqu Cultural Exchange Programme co-organised with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong for local Cantonese opera artists had been a huge success.

On a different note, the CEO confirmed that Dr. Lars Nittve, Executive Director of M+, will stand down in January 2016. The CEO emphasised Dr. Nittve will continue to serve as an External Advisor. Meanwhile, a global search for a suitable replacement is underway.

On the latest development of various building projects, the Board noted that the construction of M+ Museum took a major step forward as the main works have now commenced following the completion of the foundation works in September. The main superstructure works of the Xiqu Centre are progressing well as they are nearing completion. The construction of the Arts Pavilion is also progressing on schedule and is anticipated to open in mid-2016.

[*West Kowloon Cultural District Newsroom*, 09/11/2015]

West Kowloon initiates a 3-month International Workshop Festival of Theatre

The WKCD with local and overseas partners are presenting a biennale International Workshop Festival of Theatre until mid-November 2015. According to the Authority, this serves as a meeting point to allow new creative relationships to emerge, and flourish possible collaborations or actual projects in the coming years.

To promote this initiative, a new online video magazine featuring videos of a series of corresponding public lectures will jointly be held by local and overseas theatre practitioners. Through taking part in the lectures, audiences can gain first-hand experience and information about a broad range of contemporary theatre making.

During the Festival, nine leading international theatre and contemporary performance makers will share their insights and approaches. The first workshop and public lecture was held in August, where Stefan Kaegi, one of the co-directors of Rimini Protokoll, shared his experiences of theatre-making based on real people instead of actors, and current stories instead of distant classics.

[*West Kowloon Cultural District Newsroom*, 09/10/2015]

Funding shift mooted for final phase of Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District project

The government floats the idea of a new funding model for the third and final phase of the WKCD, after phases one and two ate up the entire initial grant of HK\$21.6 billion.

Under the current funding model, development rights for commercial land belong to the government. However, due to a surge in construction costs and delays to the express rail link, the injection has not been sufficient to cover the development of the entire site.

As a background, an initial plan to use land development to finance the project was scrapped due to public concerns over collusion between the government and property developers. A WKCD board member said now is the time to reconsider the rejected plan and pass all development rights to the Authority. The member estimated the premium commercial land on the reclaimed site worth HK\$40 billion to HK\$50 billion. He advocated for the WKCD to develop the site and turn the HK\$21.6 billion initial grant into a loan. Being optimistic, he anticipated a win-win situation, where the WKCD is able to repay the entire initial grant with interest.

[*South China Morning Post*, 25/11/2015]

Lars Nittve stuns Hong Kong art world with exit from M+ museum he built from scratch

Stakeholders were left reeling in shock as the WKCD announced the departure of Dr. Lars Nittve, five-year Executive Director of M+ the visual culture museum, triggering fresh questions as to why world-renowned cultural leaders would leave the mega project one after another. The WKCD CEO stressed Dr. Lars Nittve will continue his service as an external adviser.

Dr. Nittve will be the second top executive to exit in just over half a year, following the premature departure of former CEO Michael Lynch in August. The arts community raised concerns about whether politics had gotten in the way of the administration. A troubled gallerist suggested there may be such an inherent problem of the Authority being clueless in retaining the cultural leaders.

An art critic accounted Dr. Nittve's departure to the tremendous political pressure facing the WKCD as being a "political job under the spotlight", and the Legislative Council was not particularly supportive. He urged the government to reconsider its approach if it had been interfering with artistic independence of the WKCD.

Dr. Nittve said his decision to leave four years before the museum is to open was "not an easy one to take". However, he believes this is the right time to hand over M+ to someone else, which he built from scratch with a team of curators, now managing more than 4,300 pieces of work.

[*South China Morning Post*, 06/10/2015]

Lars Nittve: why I'm quitting Hong Kong arts hub role

Nittve was the founding director of the Tate Modern museum in London, proven to be a huge success. The government was overjoyed when Nittve agreed to lead the WKCD project. Under his leadership, M+ has been described as the most ambitious museum project since the Centre Pompidou opened in Paris nearly 40 years ago.

On 31 July 2015 before leaving prematurely as the CEO of the WKCD, Michael Lynch assured that all would be well with the much-delayed, multibillion-dollar project as the Authority still had people like Lars Nittve. Just nine weeks later, Nittve stunned the international art world by announcing that he will step down, too. Nittve has now placed confidence in the new CEO, Duncan Pescod, who succeeded Michael Lynch. On a different note, Tobias Berger quit his job as curator at M+ in this April.

When asked for their reactions, potentially in efforts to play down Nittve's decision, individuals ranging from the head of a public arts body to a senior curator at M+ all said Nittve's announcement was widely anticipated, and that it would not derail the project. To the same end, Nittve stressed he is not really leaving, but will continue to serve as a consultant of the WKCD. He said the decision to leave was a recent one during his sabbatical in this August. Nittve reassured the public he is not departing for health issues, the new CEO, or a new job.

When asked about the project, Nittve viewed the pressing issue is the horrendous delays in construction. First proposed in 1998, 17 years later, hardly anything has been built on the 40 hectares site. He stated if the opening date of M+ was 2017, it would have been possible for him to stay. But as the opening date keep being rolled back, he decided there were other things in life that has greater priorities.

As Nittve admits, he felt frustrated by politicians who level unconstructive criticisms at the WKCD and M+ on issues such as having foreigners in leadership roles. However, he dismissed the fact that so many people in Hong Kong are disenchanted with the WKCD or the rumour of Beijing's intervention with the artistic freedom enjoyed by his team as causes for his departure.

Nittve remains confident that the once-a-month commute to Hong Kong as a consultant remains "very doable". He said he cannot see how M+ could possibly suffer any more significant delay as "any problem that could pop up would have popped up" by this stage in his experience.

His only concern is whether the Authority can hang onto other senior people at M+. He opined the WKCD has to make sure those talents do not leave.

[*South China Morning Post*, 02/11/2015]

HONG KONG BRIEFING

AFCD encourages hikers to take waste away

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") launched a public education campaign called "Take your litter home" to encourage hikers to take their own waste home after hiking or picnicking. The campaign is jointly organised by the AFCD and 17 green groups and hiking groups.

At the launching ceremony, the Secretary for the Environment said that country parks are popular leisure spots and draw more than 11 million visitors every year. But unfortunately, about 3,800 tonnes of wastes were collected from country parks last year.

The Secretary explained that discarding waste not only affects the natural environment but also the habitats of wild animals, as discarded wastes can be easily blown to hillsides, valleys, reservoirs and coastal areas which makes them difficult to clean up. As well, waste is eaten by wild animals which damage their health.

The Secretary urged hikers to not only clean up their waste but also to reduce their waste at source. It is vital to use only reusable water bottles, food containers and towels and less disposable items.

To promote the idea, AFCD launched a one-year trial scheme at four selected hiking trails to nurture in the public a habit of taking away waste. At these trials, litter bins will only be placed at the main entrance and no litter bins will be placed along these trails.

Banners and posters will be displayed at the trial areas and main entrances of the trails to remind the public. Nature Ambassadors will be deployed to remind hikers to dispose their waste outside the country parks. Country Park Rangers will patrol the area and closely monitor enforcement. Data will be collected for reviewing the effectiveness of the trial scheme in the future.

[*AFCD Press Release*, 20/09/2015]

Eastern Community Green Station opens

The Eastern Community Green Station ("CGS") officially opened on 23 September 2015. The CGS aims not only to strengthen environmental education but also to supplement existing private recycling services by providing collection services for recyclables of low economic value, enabling more residents to participate in waste reduction and recycling. The CGS is located at 30 Oi Shun Road, Shau Kei Wan. It is operated by Po Leung Kuk under a 3 year service contract.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Secretary for the Environment said that the Eastern CGS is a green building project designed to best suit the district's need. He firmly believes that the CGS will provide support for the community in the collection of low-value recyclables such as electrical appliances, fluorescent lamps, fluorescent tubes, glass bottles and rechargeable batteries. These items will then be delivered to qualified recyclers for further handling. The operator will promote clean recycling and other green messages through public education including exhibitions, seminars and workshops.

Easter CGS comprises container modules designed by the Architectural Services Department, and was a winner of the merit award under the *Green Building Award 2014* jointly organised by the Hong Kong Green Building Council and the Professional Green Building Council.

The Eastern CGS has been well received by the local community. More than 5,000 visitors attended during the initial days of operation. Many visitors gave positive feedback regarding the activities organised by the operator.

So far, over 60 housing estates have been registered for the collection of waste electrical appliances and equipment, glass bottles and other recyclables. The operator indicated that it will continue to expand its service network in the district and gradually increase the types of recyclables to be collected.

[*EPD Press Release*, 23/09/2015]

Shoreline cleanup day

Led by the Secretary for the Environment, representatives of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines, green groups and other related organisations jointly took part in the Shorelines Cleanup Day held at Shui Hau on Lantau Island on 26 September 2015 to promote clean shorelines.

The Working Group was established in November 2012 with the aim of keeping Hong Kong's shorelines clean through inter-departmental collaboration and joint government and community efforts. The Working Group is co-ordinated by the Environment Bureau. Its members include representatives from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department; the Environmental Protection Department; the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department; the Leisure and Cultural Services Department; the Marine Department; the Civil Engineering and Development Department; the Drainage Services Department and the Lands Department.

The cleanup operation involved sorting and systematically recording the types of refuse collected in order to better understand the problem of refuse accumulation in the area.

Most of the refuse collected was single-use waste plastic items. The Secretary urged the public to take their litter home when engaging in outdoor activities. Disposable utensils and containers, like plastic bottles, paper containers, and foam plastic lunch boxes, should be used sparingly in order to help reduce waste at source and prevent further polluting the marine environment.

The Secretary said that the scenic environment, spectacular shorelines and a rich marine biodiversity are our precious assets, and that we cannot solely rely on the government's effort to conserve natural resources. Instead, the public should take the initiative to protect the environment.

According to a study report released by the Working Group in April earlier this year, over 80% of Hong Kong's marine refuse originated from Hong Kong's land-based sources, with shoreline and recreational activities being the predominant activity contributing to marine refuse. This reveals the problem of improper waste disposal by the public and their poor civic awareness. Apart from this, the study also shows that wind direction is a dominant factor affecting the distribution of marine refuse, as shorelines facing the prevailing wind direction tend to accumulate more refuse.

[EPD Press Release, 26/09/2015]

HK and Guangdong to work together on cleaner production

The governments of Guangdong Province and the HKSAR held the second meeting of the Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Working Group on Cleaner Production ("JWGCP") on 29th October 2015, co-chaired by our Secretary for the Environment and the Vice Director-General of the Economic and Information Commission of Guangdong Province ("GDEIC"). In recognition of the efforts of more than 160 Hong Kong-owned enterprises in Guangdong in pursuing cleaner production, a presentation ceremony for the Hong Kong-Guangdong Cleaner Production Partners Recognition Scheme (the "Scheme") was held.

The benefits of cleaner production are twofold: enterprises may not only improve their environmental performance and reduce pollutant emissions but also increase their net income by saving energy and reducing consumption of production materials.

The HKSAR government extended the Cleaner Production Partners Programme (the "Programme") for another five years to 2020 by injecting an additional funding of HK\$150 million into the Programme. The government of Guangdong Province granted a cash reward to those enterprises which obtained a commendation as Hong Kong-Guangdong Cleaner Production Partners (Manufacturing) from Guangdong's funding scheme for energy saving and consumption reduction.

A work plan requiring the two governments to continue to take forward the Programme, jointly organise the Scheme, encourage relevant industries to adopt cleaner production technologies for reduction of volatile organic compounds, greater use of high efficiency motors, and the upgrading of motors and injection moulding machines for energy saving, was agreed at the meeting. Both sides also agreed that a mechanism will be developed to synchronise information and relevant policies and initiatives for the promotion of cleaner production.

A total of 163 enterprises were commended as Hong Kong-Guangdong Cleaner Production Partners, out of which 73 and 74 Hong Kong-owned manufacturing enterprises were respectively commended as Excellent Partners and Partners.

Since the launch of the Programme by the EPD in collaboration with the GDEIC in 2008, more than 2,500 funding applications have been approved.

[EPD Press Release, 29/10/2015]

Used computers and electrical appliances recovered

At the completion of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment ("WEEE") Recycling Programme, about 8,000 items, or 75 tonnes, of used computer equipment, electrical appliances and other electronic products were collected from 175 primary and secondary schools. The culture of "use less, waste less" was promoted among the school children.

The WEEE programme is now in its third year. The programme is part of the EPD's preparatory work to implement the mandatory producer responsibility scheme ("PRS") mentioned in the *Electrical Equipment and Electronic Equipment (Amendment) Bill 2015*. The idea was to encourage school children to recycle their own WEEE, while at the same time promoting the green habit of waste reduction and recycling at school.

The in-house promotional activities were launched following the summer vacation. The EPD provided assistance by disseminating information, providing technical support and arranging for collection trucks to visit schools in October and November. The Community Green Stations in Sha Tin and Eastern District also assisted by providing logistics support for the programme.

The EPD has for sometime organised recycling programmes for the public to encourage them to properly handle their own WEEEs. The WEEE collected from schools will first be sorted. Functional items will then be delivered to the "WEEE Go Green" project operated by St James Settlement for donation to the needy after checking and repairing. Non-functional items will be stored by contractors until the commissioning of the WEEE treatment and recycling facility at the EcoPark in Tuen Mun for proper treatment and dismantling. Waste rechargeable batteries will be treated properly under the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Programme managed by the Hong Kong WEEE Recycling Association.

The purpose of the mandatory PRS on WEEE to be implemented is to ensure that the locally generated WEEE will be properly treated. Funding support for further development of the programme has been obtained.

[EPD Press Release, 29/11/2015]

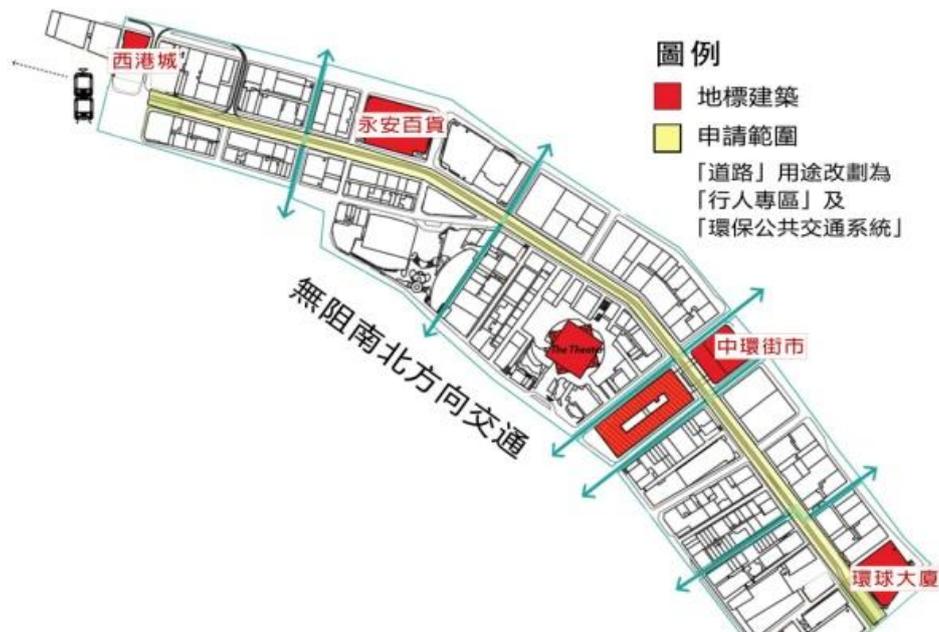
Support for the Des Voeux Road Central rezoning application

Clean Air Network ("CAN"), Designing Hong Kong, Friends of the Earth (HK) and the Conservancy Association have jointly submitted a section 12A application to the Town Planning Board to rezone Des Voeux Road Central ("DVRC") from "road" to "Pedestrian Area and Environmentally Friendly Transport System".

Comments were invited from the public and submission of comments closed on 16 October 2015.

The aim of the proposal is to create a tram and pedestrian district comprising promenades and plants, as well as various entertainment and community activities. It is envisaged that the area will become an important open public space and a vital east-west pedestrian link for all who work in or visit the Central Business District of Hong Kong.

The proposal provides an opportunity to rearrange traffic, address congestion, and reduce roadside noise and air pollution in Central. The proposal includes a strip along the centre of the DVRC for environmentally friendly transport, namely tram and electric buses routes. The various north-south roads will remain open so that traffic can connect between Queen's Road Central and Connaught Road Central.



[CAN Press Release, 07/10/2015]

Industry opposition to glass bottle levy

A levy on glass bottles should not exceed 50 HK cents; the proposed charge of HK\$1 would cost the industry HK\$300 million a year, say industrialists. The question was raised in Legislative Council debate on the government's proposed levy on glass bottles to reduce waste and encourage recycling.

The Federation of Hong Kong Industries told legislators that a heavy levy on suppliers would only be passed on to consumers and may not drive the public to reduce waste. The Federation suggested that instead the government should offer economic incentives to both consumers and suppliers.

The catering industry said it is difficult to recycle glass bottles as it is noisy to transport them. It doubted the effectiveness of a levy in the absence of an effective recycling system. However, Greeners Action welcomed the scheme and urged the government to subsidise the industry to promote a bottle refund scheme.

The Environmental Protection Department's deputy director of environmental protection, Howard Chan, said about 200 tonnes of bottles are dumped in landfills every day and a ban would be inappropriate at this time. Chan said a levy is a prudent move and that its aim is to cover the cost of recycling. The department would consider expanding the scheme to include other glass containers.

[The Standard, 01/12/2015]

'Samaritan' waste law rejected

The government has no plans to introduce a "Good Samaritan" law to exempt goodwilled food donors from legal liabilities, Acting Secretary for the Environment Christine Loh Kung-wai said. Loh also ruled out legislation requiring supermarkets to reduce food waste, saying Hong Kong is not in a position to do so at this time.

According to lawmaker Sin chung-kai, France this year introduced a law requiring large supermarkets to donate edible unsold food to charities for immediate distribution to people in need.

In the United States, a federal law was passed in 1996 to protect good-faith food donors from civil and criminal liability should the product later cause harm to recipients, unless gross negligence or intentional misconduct was involved.

Loh said neither initiative is something the government would consider at present. The disposal of unsold food involves complex issues, especially food safety. A good Samaritan law does not necessarily mean a large amount of food would go to the needy, given that there should be a match between donation and consumption, she said. The government would rather improve cooperation with non-government organisations to achieve a reduction in food waste.

The Environment and Conservation Fund has approved 10 projects worth HK\$15 million, which aim to collect approximately 950 tonnes of food over two years for distribution to 700,000 people.

Lawmakers and green groups questioned how the government would be able to meet its target of reducing food waste in landfills by 40 percent from 2014 to 2022 without legislation or new incentives. About 1.18 million tonnes went to the landfills in 2013, an increase of 14 percent over 2004, according to government figures.

A Greeners Action senior project officer said the food donation rate in the United States more than doubled within a decade following the introduction of Good Samaritan law.

[The Standard, 03/12/2015]

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT (ACE)

Summary of minutes of the 209th Meeting of the Advisory Council on the Environment held on 12 October 2015.

At the meeting on 12 October 2015, ACE discussed two main named items:

1. Review of the Fourth Technical Memorandum for Allocation of Emission Allowances for Power Plants (*ACE Paper 13/2015*); and
2. Report on the 130th Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee (EIASC) meeting (*ACE Paper 14/2015*).

Review of the Fourth Technical Memorandum for Allocation of Emission Allowances for Power Plants (ACE Paper 13/2015)

The paper sought members' views on the proposal to further reduce emission allowances for power plants in 2020 in accordance with a Fifth Technical Memorandum ("TM") to be issued under the *Air Pollution Control Ordinance* ("APCO") (Cap. 311).

Mr. W C Mok of the EPD presented a Powerpoint presentation and briefed members on the legal framework and the best practical means ("BPM") adopted in the review of the Fourth TM. Members' support was sought for further tightening emission allowances for three specified pollutants: Sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and respirable suspended particulates ("RSP") by way of issuing a new TM (i.e. the Fifth TM), to commence on 1 January 2020.

Mr. Mok explained that the following four factors were taken into account:

- a) progress of implementing the fuel mix plan for 2020, including construction of new gas-fired units to replace some of the old power generation units;
- b) practicability of maintaining the current level of 80% of the output of the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station after 2018;
- c) new technology to control NO_x emissions from new gas-fired units; and
- d) projected local electricity consumption for 2020.

A Member asked:

1. Whether the levels of reduction in the power plants correspond with the 2020 emission reduction targets of the "Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong"; and
2. Whether it is feasible to set an emission cap for PM_{2.5} for power plants.

Mr. Mok explained that when the 2020 emission reduction targets were set, the EPD took into account a range of air improvement measures targeting various major local emission sources, including power plants, motor vehicles and maritime vessels that were considered to be attainable. New opportunities for emissions reduction had emerged and could help attain the emissions reduction targets for 2020 if implemented.

As to emission caps for power plants, Mr. Dave Ho informed ACE that emissions caps had been progressively tightened since the First TM, but at this moment it is technically impossible to set an emission cap for PM_{2.5} for power plants. He explained that we lack a reliable measurement method for the concentration of PM_{2.5} inside wet stacks and those other environmentally advanced countries, such as the US, have not capped PM_{2.5} emissions for their power plants due to this technical constraint.

Nonetheless, Mr. Mok assured members that EPD would continue to monitor closely the development of PM_{2.5} measurement technology and that control measures implemented to reduce PM₁₀ emissions will also reduce PM_{2.5} emissions.

A member raised the concern that power companies may take advantage of the 'special event provision' under the APCO to absolve them of their responsibilities of not meeting emissions caps. Mr. Mok reassured members that it is a statutory requirement that power companies should meet the caps, as stipulated in the APCO, and that the EPD will closely monitor each case to ensure that only incidents clearly proven to be beyond the control of power companies (and that they had made their best endeavour to avoid such happenings) would qualify under those provisions. Even for qualified power companies, they were obliged to exercise all due diligence to minimise their emissions.

A member enquired about the possibility of using low emission coal. Mr. Mok replied that although this would help generate less SO₂ and NO_x compared with normal coal, such low emission coal had lower heat content and therefore to produce the same amount of electricity a larger amount of coal is required, meaning emissions are about the same as for normal coal. Apart from that, low emission coal causes slagging problems and would accelerate wear and tear of coal-fired generators.

The Chairman asked why the BPM was prescribed in emission concentration limits instead of total emissions. Mr. Mok said that the total emission of a pollutant of a generation unit varied with the generation output, whilst the pollutant concentration would stay at similar levels as long as the emission performance remained the same. For this reason, it is an international practice to use emission concentrations to work out the performance of generation units (i.e. based on the pollutant's concentration and the flow rate).

A member enquired about incentives for encouraging power companies to use cleaner fuel, such as renewable energy ("RE"). Mr. Donald Ng informed the Committee that the prevailing regulatory mechanism under the *Scheme of Control Agreements* ("SCAs") had stipulated a higher rate of return for investment in RE facilities as an incentive to the two power companies to develop RE.

On the matter of facilitating access to power grids by distributing RE generators, a member suggested that the government could assist the power companies by taking up construction of RE facilities in the form of public works projects and charging the companies only for the operating costs of such facilities. This way, the discounts received by the power companies may in turn be reflected in the electricity tariff.

A member asked about the arrangement for the three landfills and how the emission caps in the TM would contribute to the reduction of carbon intensity/emissions by 2020. Mr. Dave Ho said that landfill gas from the South East New Territories Landfill would be used by a local gas company from 2016 instead of generating surplus electricity for the power grid. Details of the use of landfill gas from the remaining two strategic landfills would be provided to members after the meeting.

Both a member and the Chairman shared the view that a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted on the development of RE and that the government should adopt a broader perspective and draw on support of relevant bureaux/departments in formulating policies for the community. Mr. Donald Ng explained that there are practical constraints in developing a large-scale RE scheme in Hong Kong. These are the high production costs due to land constraints and also public acceptance, in view of the significant tariff implications. That said, Mr. Ng did not dispute the health benefits that might result from increased use of RE. He added that the government was prepared to promote its adoption, subject to the public views on possible tariff implications.

A member enquired as to the development of the offshore wind-farm on Lamma Island and the one in south eastern waters. Mr. Ng explained that the feasibility study of the wind-farm project carried out by CLP Power Hong Kong Limited ("CLP") was still underway, and that a similar project by the Hongkong Electric Company Limited ("HEC") is more advanced. Both companies yet have to submit a proposal for assessment by the government. Public consultation will then be sought.

As to the import level of nuclear energy, Mr. Ng explained that there are limitations to importing more nuclear power from the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant beyond (on average) 80% of its output. Nonetheless, Mr. Mok added that the EPD will take into account the latest development of RE facilities in the next TM review.

The same member then followed up with an enquiry about the correlation between power plant emissions and public health. Mr. Mok explained that Hong Kong's two main sources of air pollution are roadside motor vehicle emission and regional smog. Emissions from power plants are important as they form photochemical smog in the Pearl River Delta ("PRD") region comprising ozone and fine particulates. Mr. Mok said some success has already been seen with the joint efforts of Guangdong and Hong Kong governments in installing flue gas desulphurization and denitrification systems in the PRD region, in those concentration levels of SO₂ and particulates have been reduced significantly.

Another member asked whether revamping the fuel mix would be the crucial factor in reducing emissions caps if electricity demand continues to rise in the future. Mr. Mok said that the TMs would be reviewed at least once every two years and due regard would be given to the BPM and the change in fuel mix. For the current review of the Fourth TM, the government assessed emission allowances on the assumption that both HEC and CLP would have new gas-fired generation units and that CLP would have an additional 10% nuclear power supply from the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station after 2018.

To explain the drop in the projected electricity demand for Hong Kong Island, Mr. Ng said that this was due to the government introducing a series of energy efficiency and conservation initiatives, such as the *Building Energy and Efficiency Ordinance (Cap.610)*, which reduced overall electricity consumption in the territory. As there are not many major infrastructural projects on Hong Kong Island, HEC's estimated reduction in electricity consumption of around 4% in 2020 as compared to the demand projected for 2019, is reasonable.

Report on the 130th Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee (EIASC) meeting (ACE Paper 14/2015).

The Chairperson of EIASC reported that the ACE paper had summarised the discussion and recommendations of EIASC on the EIA report "Desalination Plant in Tseung Kwan O".

A Member proposed to upgrade recommendation (e) of the EIASC's recommendations in the EIA report to an endorsement condition in view of his concern as to construction of a 9-km long trunk feed system and the potential impacts on vegetation and slope works within the Clear Water Bay Country Park.

Having heard the supplementary information provided by the EPD, the meeting endorsed the EIA report, with the corrections and recommendations as set out in paragraph 10 of the paper.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Government aims to further reduce air pollutant emissions

The government published in the Gazette the *Fifth Technical Memorandum for Allocation of Emission Allowances in Respect of Specified Licences* on 23 October 2015, aiming to further reduce air pollutant emissions from power plants from 2020 onwards. The reduction, if achieved, will have a positive impact on the air quality of both Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region.

The new technical memorandum, issued under the APCO, will cap annual emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and respirable suspended particulates (RSP) from the power generation sector from 2020 at 7,670 tonnes, 21 270 tonnes and 585 tonnes respectively. As compared with the emission allowances for 2019 set under the Fourth TM, the proposed Fifth TM will further tighten emissions of both SO₂ and NO_x by 17% as well as RSP by 16% for the electricity sector.

A spokesperson for the EPD explained that companies will have to reduce their reliance coal for energy. For Hongkong Electric Company Limited, a new gas-fired generation unit would be required by the end of 2019 to meet electricity demand, as the old coal-fired generation units retire. Power Hong Kong Limited ("CLP") will import an additional 10% of nuclear electricity from the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station ("DBNPS") beyond 2018 in addition to the 70% of the nuclear electricity output from DBNPS under the existing supply contract.

The government set out in March this year its plan on the future fuel mix for electricity generation to increase the percentage of natural gas generation to around 50% in 2020, and to maintain the current interim measure of importing from the DBNPS 80% of nuclear output so that nuclear import would account for around 25% of the total electricity supply. In response to the fuel mix plan for 2020, the CLP is undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment in relation to installing new gas-fired generation units at its Black Point Power Station. The EPD will review the Technical Memorandum again in 2016 when more information is available.

[EPD Press Release, 23/10/2015]

WHO warns China of climate change dangers

The WHO has asked Beijing to review the impacts of climate change, as a new study reveals that rising temperatures could unravel decades of progress in social and health development in China.

The appeal was made just a few days before world leaders met in Paris for COP21 in early December 2015. A doctor, who is a team leader of climate change and health within the WHO, said "Recognising the problem is only the first step, it is also necessary to do evidence-based assessments of all of the health risks, and identify the most effective interventions to control them."

The report entitled *Climate and Health Country Profiles, China* projected the country's annual average temperature will rise by about 6.1 degrees Celsius between 1990 and 2100 in a high-emissions scenario. If emissions fall rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.7 degrees.

Under the first scenario, extreme weather such as heat-waves and heavy rainfall could become more frequent. It is estimated that about 23 million people per year will be affected if Beijing does not make large investments to help its people adapt. Contrasted with, if emissions are cut back rapidly and protective measures are strengthened, the number of affected people would drop dramatically to 2,400 annually.

The number of annual warm spell days is also projected to rise from fewer than 10 in 1990 to about 165 on average by 2100.

Heat-related medical conditions are expected to be worsen, especially for the elderly, children and the chronically ill. Heat-related fatalities among the elderly are projected to rise to almost 49 deaths per 100,000 people by 2080, about 6.86 million in total if the population stays at 1.4 billion, compared to an estimated baseline of just over two deaths per 100,000 people annually between 1961 and 1990.

The number of days with heavy rainfall (20mm or more) could increase by almost three days on average between 1990 and 2100. This may expose the country to inland river flood risks, affecting food production and water supplies.

The same drivers for climate change, such as carbon emissions, are also responsible for air pollution.

[SCMP, 21/11/2015]

Is the carbon budget unrealistic?

Over the past few years the idea of a global carbon budget has become a key topic of debate internationally. The budget is a goal set by the United Nations, which specifies a total amount of carbon dioxide we can emit into the atmosphere in order to keep the increase in average global temperatures to below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, or 2 degrees Celsius.

The notion is simple: the budget is the amount or remaining quota of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, as explicitly defined. In order to meet the target, the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* estimates that we would have to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by between 40% to 70% from the 2010 levels by 2050. After that, emissions would have to fall to "net zero" by the end of the century.

The term 'negative emission' is the opposite of "emission". The idea is to develop technology that would remove carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere, allowing for more fossil fuel emissions over the next few decades.

However, whilst the idea of removing emissions from the atmosphere may sound attractive to many, theoretically, net negative emissions could be achieved only by extensive reforestation and forest growth, or by schemes that combine bio-energy use with carbon capture and storage. At a small scale, that is possible. The real question remains as to how much they can be scaled up without having unacceptable social, economic or environmental consequences.

Due to the inconvenience of the above method, a new technology called "bio-energy" has been researched, involving carbon capture and storage. Fast-growing vegetation species are cultivated in order to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. These plants would then be burned in power plants and emissions captured and pumped underground.

However, this bio-energy technology does not exist at scale at present. To achieve the relevant negative emissions, it is necessary to plant around 500 million hectares of biomass crops, equivalent to an area of one and a half times the size of India. There will also be a need for transport and storage facilities to deal with the carbon dioxide extracted.

Research has taken into account various difficulties and impossibilities and maintained that a 3.6 degree target can still be reached.

Looking at the mathematics, there is a difference between the calculations done by climate economists and climate scientists. The inclusion of negative emissions in the climate economists' model allows them to significantly increase the carbon budget calculated by climate scientists, which does not include the negative emissions. This effectively turns the carbon emission budget into a continuous carbon debt.

The public has taken little, if any, notice of these considerations and even policy makers are often unaware of the negative emissions climate economists assume for the future with dubious calculations.

At present we are on the verge of repeating the same mistake that led to the financial crisis: relying on economic models that are completely unrealistic.

[*International New York Times*, 01/12/2015]

Private sector to join in the fight against climate change

While the COP21 (Climate Summit) took place in Paris, a local Hong Kong business group has launched a strategy to help mitigate risks arising from climate change.

The Business Environment Council published the Climate Resilient Roadmap, aiming to highlight the impacts of climate change on Hong Kong. The paper predicts that Hong Kong will experience a 3 to 5.5-degree temperature increase and a one-metre sea level rise if the world were to continue business as usual.

The Chairman of the council's *Climate Change Business Forum Advisory Group* warned the public that the city needs to be ready and resilient, and that the effects of climate change on the food and supermarket sector, and the heat stress experienced by outdoor workers, need to be addressed. The acting Secretary for the Environmental said that the private sector, not just the government, is required to work hard to tackle climate change.

Year 2015 has been the warmest year in recorded history for Hong Kong; the average temperature between January and October was 24.7 degrees, caused by one of the strongest El Nino phenomena to date, as the effects of global warming have accelerated.

[SCMP, 01/12/2015]

The three key-players in UN climate change conference

India, China and the US are the three critical key-players which hold the key to large-scale global progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Multilateral, national and sub-national policies play an important role in responding to the unique climate circumstances faced by societies around the globe. The UN climate process tried to propose one unified resolution for all countries, but has met with great difficulties as the world shifted to more localised emission policies. The Paris meeting in December 2015 reflects this shift, as attendees tried to shape individual national commitments of

countries around the world into a new, dynamic, anti-climate change global compact. This allowed the three key-players: China, the US and India, which together make up roughly 40% of global carbon emissions to take a lead in a new and more sustainable energy future.

Various cooperation arrangements and agreements made between the US and China showed that real progress can be made on climate both nationally and bilaterally. The two countries have cooperated significantly over the past two decades by embracing goals for reducing emissions, raising energy efficiency standards and expanding renewable energy deployment in near and long terms.

A climate agreement between the two countries was signed back in November 2014, signalling President Obama's intention to dramatically lower the carbon footprint of America's energy sector before he leaves office. It also reaffirmed President Xi's commitment to lower carbon emissions. In the agreement, the US has pledged to reduce emissions by 26-28% compared with the 2005 levels. China has committed to peak emissions and increase the non-fossil fuel share of its energy mix to 20% by about 2030.

As evident from China's new economic strategy, it intends to reshape its heavily industrial, carbon-intensive economy to a more diversified, sustainable model. Focus has been put in industrial and building efficiency in order to reduce carbon intensity, as well as incentivising wider adoption of electric vehicles. If fully implemented, these measures will have a significant global impact.

In contrast with China, the challenge for India is to reduce its service sector reliance and to invest more in core transport, industrial and energy sectors. If China and India cooperate, renewable energy deployment can be significantly increased worldwide, as seen from the Sino-Indian agreement in May that resulted in a \$22 billion investment in new energy projects.

Likewise, India and the US agreed to a range of cooperative clean energy projects in January 2015. As seen from the "US-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy", there was a joint commitment to advance research and development, clean energy and finance mechanisms, and cooperation on appliance efficiency and clean energy storage.

It is now a promising time for developing countries like China and India to forge a low-carbon economic pathway by capitalising the effective and affordable energy technologies widely available to accelerate their energy transition.

To make even better progress, the US, China and India must direct more public and private resources to combat climate change. At the moment, less than 2% of global public research and development funding is spent on renewable energy (about \$5 billion dollars in total). It is possible for the three key-players to become key-leaders by directing, say, 5% of their public research and development budgets towards combating climate change. The three should also cooperate to leverage private sectors to invest in new energy technologies to reduce global carbon emission.

If the three could develop cooperative climate change strategies, they can certainly help bridge the divide between the developing and developed countries involved in climate negotiations.

[*The Guardian*, 30/11/2015]

Hong Kong urged to adopt emissions plan

Green groups have called on Secretary for the Environment Wong Kam-sing to outline an emissions plan for 2030 and beyond. Wong, who is in Paris for the huge climate change meeting of governments, should bring ideas from other regions back home, they said.

Currently, Hong Kong's plan is to reduce emissions by 19 to 33 percent as compared to 2005 levels by 2020. It is odd that China has outlined its plan well beyond 2020, said Gavin Edwards of the World Wildlife Fund. The plan may include "a scheme to encourage renewable energy development," he added.

A Greenpeace senior campaigner Frances Yeung Hoi-shan said it is time to start formulating a 2030 target since "it takes time to change economic and energy models, including renewable energy."

[*The Standard*, 01/12/2015]

China and U.S. urge climate-change action

President Xi Jinping has called for rich nations to keep a promise to provide US\$100 billion (HK\$778 billion) a year to aid others in a climate-changing world. Xi told the UN climate summit in Paris that developed countries should accept "more shared responsibilities" for limiting global warming and helping poor countries adapt to climate change. It is also important that climate-friendly technologies be transferred to developing countries, he said.

President Barack Obama said the United States accepted its responsibility as the world's second-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases to help fix climate change. He stressed global action need not hit economic growth. Obama said nowhere has coordination with Beijing been more critical or fruitful than on climate change.

Rich nations in fact pledged at a UN summit in Copenhagen in 2009 to muster US\$100 billion annually to aid poor countries, beginning in 2020. The money is to help poor nations cut greenhouse gas emissions that drive global warming, as well as to adapt to rising seas, droughts and other effects of global warming. Yet six years later poor nations are frustrated that rich countries have not fully committed to the fund.

As the summit opened, Beijing suffered its worst air pollution of the year yesterday, with monitoring sites throughout the capital reporting extremely hazardous levels of pollutants.

[*The Standard*, 01/12/2015]

China's proposed carbon market

China's long-awaited nationwide carbon market will cover as many as 10,000 companies and regulate nearly half of the country's total emissions once launched in 2017, a senior official said on the sidelines of the Paris climate talks yesterday.

China's carbon market will become the world's biggest, and its targets will be higher than those set by the state in order to guarantee it had sufficient effect. The market will cover 31 provinces, six industrial sectors and 15 sub-industries, and would involve 4 billion tones of annual carbon emissions at its launch, amounting to almost half of the country's total.

While China has included the promotion of "market mechanisms" in its pledges to combat climate change, they remain controversial and were unlikely to be included in a final agreement in Paris, said Su Wei, China's top climate negotiator, at a briefing in Paris on Saturday. "As far as market mechanisms are concerned, we think the market could play a very important role in achieving actions to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change," he said.

"But as to whether there is going to be inclusion in the text of the Paris agreement, we think that that is not the priority," Su said. "There are a lot of different views about whether we should rely more on non-market mechanisms... and I don't think that sort of difference should stand in the way of having a successful outcome in the Paris [climate] negotiations."

China's central government pledged last year to peak carbon output by around 2030, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and offer help to poor countries adapting to the impact of global warming.

[SCMP, 09/12/2015]

Britain

More rail disruption predicted due to climate change

A study suggests that climate change could disrupt up to a third of rail services travelling to and from the South West within the next 100 years.

Hit by severe storms, the line was forced to close for two months in 2014. According to the report, published in the *Journal of Transport Geography*, 10% of journeys on the line could be affected by 2040.

The report said adverse weather disrupted the line about 10 days per year on average but according to sea-level predictions, this number could rise to almost 40 by 2040 and up to 120 by 2100. In the words of Dr David Dawson, from the University of Leeds, the long-term future of the line was "really worrying".

The Department for Transport said it had invested £31m in improving the resilience of the route and was "exploring the potential for longer-term improvements in the area".

[BBC, 22/12/015]

India

Tough measures for India from Paris' COP21 climate summit

Countries have reached some consensus in reducing carbon emissions at the Climate Change Conference held in Paris; however, the real challenge is how these countries will fulfill their promises.

India has made key non-binding moral commitments at Paris arrived at reducing its emissions intensity by 33-35 per cent by 2030, creating 175 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2022, increasing the forest cover of the country and absorbing 2.5 to 3 gigatonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.

Critics observed that India's climate plans seem to have been made in a hurry, without deep analysis of its future needs. For example, it has not jointed with the global community to plan and apportion carbon budgets. India still has not tackled an important question about its future requirements. "India has not analytically explored the question of how much coal we need," says Navroz Dubash, senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in Delhi.

Are the numbers promised by India big numbers that could not be achieved within the deadline? The answer is awaited.

[Economic Times (India), 23/12/2015]

2015 warmest year on record

Blistering heat blanketed the Earth last year like never before, making 2015 by far the hottest year in modern times and raising new concerns about the accelerating pace of climate change. Not only was 2015 the warmest worldwide since 1880, it shattered the previous record held in 2014 by the widest margin ever observed, said the report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"During 2015, the average temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.62 Fahrenheit [0.90 Celsius] above the 20th century average," said the NOAA report. "This was the highest among all years in the 1880-2015 record." Compared to 2014, last year was 0.13 Celsius warmer, the "largest margin by which the annual global temperature record has been broken".

The US space agency Nasa, which monitors global climate using a fleet of satellites and weather stations, confirmed that last year broke records for heat in contemporary times.

Nasa said that the temperature changes are largely driven by increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere. "Climate change is the challenge of our generation," said Nasa Administrator Charles Bolden. "Today's announcement not only under-scores how critical Nasa's Earth observation programme is, it is a key data point that should make policymakers stand up and take notice – now is the time to act on climate."

Last year marked the fourth time a global temperature record has been set this century.

Moreover, the latest finding adds to a steady rise in heat across land and sea surfaces that have seen records repeatedly broken over the years. Regions of eastern and southern Africa experienced more scorching days than ever, as did large parts of the northeastern and equatorial Pacific boosted by the El Nino weather phenomenon.

[SCMP, 22/01/2016]

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

CHINA

Burning stubble is easy but dirty fix for farmers

20 years ago, farmers in the Mainland would cut and store the stubble and reuse it as fuel for cooking or compost; nowadays, farmers continue to burn stubble in their fields after harvest, creating a major source of air pollution despite tougher penalties, according to official sources.

Spokesman of the Ministry of Environmental Protection said burn-offs across the country went up by nearly 7 per cent yearly. The increase is in defiance of warnings such as those erected in Henan, where banners in rural areas spell out the dangers of the practice to farmers.

Harvesting the stubble for future use is a sustainable way. However, as more and more farmers are heading to cities, driving up the wages, it is increasingly uneconomic to harvest the stubble. Some estimates suggest that it usually took a week to 10 days for farmers, or migrant workers returning home for the harvest. Burning was by far the cheapest way of dealing with it.

A state television report suggested that harvesting stubble raised the cost of cultivating each hectare by 1,500 yuan (HK\$1,827), cutting the farmers' return by a fifth.

The government responds to the problem by penalizing farmers who burn off the agricultural waste. However, banning the farmers from burning off the stubble may not be a solution. Hu Xingdou, a professor of economics at Beijing Institute of Technology, said government officials should work out proper incentive schemes to encourage the recycling of crop waste.

[SCMP, 19/11/2015]

Pilot project to test mandatory pollution insurance

In an attempt to alleviate hazards to air, land and water, China is considering making environmental liability insurance mandatory for companies that pose high pollution risks.

The draft plan developed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection requires companies which discharge harmful pollutants into the environment to take out insurance to cover the costs of cleaning up after the contamination of air, water or land.

China undertook a pilot project to promote voluntary liability insurance in 2007 and expanded it to cover the whole country in 2013.

However, companies are sceptical towards this kind of insurance. One criticism of such insurance in the past has been that companies found it hard to draw on the insurance following polluting incidents, said Li Xuan, a research at the Policy Research Center for Environment and Economy. For example, insurance payments were only 4 percent of the money claimed by the insured parties in Sichuan province.

According to Shen Xiaoyue, head of the policy office at the center, in the first three quarters of 2015, total insurance premiums for liability insurance was approximately 70 million yuan in 11 provinces.

[China Daily, 26/11/2015]

Beijing's red smog alert

Beijing issued its first red alert for smog last night as the capital was hit by hazardous levels of pollution for the second time within a week. The alert – the highest in a four-tier system – will stay in place until noon on Thursday.

Beijing has ordered primary and secondary schools to close and recommended government departments, public institutions and companies to implement flexible working hours. It means traffic will be heavily controlled. Car usage will be limited based on the last number of the vehicle's licence plate – odd and even numbers will be allowed on the roads on alternate days. Government departments will be required to reduce car usage by 30 per cent. Public transport will run on extended timetables, while heavy construction trucks will be banned from the roads.

All outdoor construction will be suspended and factories will be required to close for two days or face operating restrictions. Firework displays and barbecues are also prohibited.

Beijing's real time air pollution index yesterday recorded an average between 200 and 260, a level classified as "very unhealthy".

Beijing, as well as nine surrounding cities in Tianjin (天津) and Hebei (河北), had been under an orange alert – the second-highest level – since Saturday. Schools and kindergartens have already suspended all outdoor activities, while municipal government departments encouraged employees to use public transport.

Beijing's environmental protection authority has come under fire for not issuing the highest-level red alert when the city experienced hazardous pollution for five consecutive days from November 27.

[SCMP, 08/12/2015]

SINGAPORE

Singapore shuts schools, distributes masks for haze

Pollution is a global matter as pollutants will travel across country boundaries. The forest fires in Indonesia had caused serious haze and smog to its neighbours.

Meanwhile, people in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia suffer from the smoke, a serious health hazard, especially for the elderly, children and those with breathing problems. Singapore shut schools and began distributing free antipollution masks to the elderly and other vulnerable people as a thick smoky haze cast covered the island nation with pollution reaching its worst level this year.

Strict and active measures have been taken by the Indonesian government to look into the cause of the fires. Indonesia's environment and forestry ministry said the licenses of four Indonesian plantation companies were suspended or revoked for clearing land illegally and sparking forest fires.

[SCMP, 26/09/2015]

NORTH KOREA

Dear Leader plans massive re-afforestation

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has launched a war on deforestation, the country's foreign minister said on Monday at the Paris climate talks, pledging to "actively engage" in global environment efforts.

The reclusive country is among the 196 nations gathered in the French capital to craft a deal aimed at curbing the greenhouse gas emission that are causing climate change. Kim "has declared war on deforestation North Korea and has put forward a massive project to turn all the mountains of the country into mountains of gold, thickly wooded with trees," Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong told delegates.

[SCMP, 09/12/2015]

SOUTH KOREA

Boost for green cars

South Korea has unveiled an ambitious plan to dramatically increase the production of environmentally friendly cars by 2020, as part of global efforts to cut carbon emissions and curb climate change.

Under policy goals released by the energy ministry, the annual production output of "green cars", such as hybrid and electric-powered vehicles, would increase sharply from 90,000 this year to 920,000 over the next five years. Seoul eventually hopes such vehicles would account for 20 per cent of all cars sold in the domestic market, compared with the current share of just 2 per cent.

The energy ministry said the new green car policy would help Seoul cut carbon emissions by 3.8 million tonnes over the next five years. It vowed to invest US\$127 million to help local carmakers improve the range of battery-powered cars and eventually drive down prices. Hundreds of new electric charging stations will be built across the nation – with a target of 1,400 by 2020, compared to the current number of 400.

The issue of vehicle emissions has taken on a higher public profile recently in South Korea as a result of the scandal involving Volkswagen and faked emissions standards.

South Korea has been slow in adopting green car technology. But Hyundai – South Korea's largest automaker – has been seeking to expand its presence in the global green car market that is currently dominated by Japan's Toyota.

Hyundai, the world's fifth-largest carmaker, together with its smaller affiliate Kia, plans to triple its fuel-efficient car models to 22 over the next five years.

[SCMP, 09/12/2015]

BRAZIL

Tribes want compensation for "Brazilian Fukushima"

Two dams on the Rio Doce ("Sweet River" in Portuguese) collapsed on 5 November 2015, wiping out not only the local environment, but also homes of the Krenak indigenous people.

Authorities have described the toxic mudslide as "the worst environmental disaster in Brazil's history", and some local biologists have labelled it a "Brazilian Fukushima". The accident, which caused at least 11 deaths and has left 12 people missing, is currently a threat to the rich environment of the region and to the sustainability of economical sectors that rely on its water to farm or to produce paper from eucalyptus trees.

The dams were built at an iron-ore mine property of mining company Samarco, which is equally owned by Vale, a Brazilian mining company, and its Australian partner BHP Billiton in Minas Gerais. Angers erupted against Vale for causing the environmental destruction.

In a desperate and powerful demonstration, 350 tribe members moved their homes from the fertile slopes to the tracks of Vale's private railway in the region and blockading people from using the railway.

After four days of blockade and intense negotiations, Vale – which exports billions of dollars of minerals to China through this 660km railway – and the Krenak reached a deal to open the route. The world's largest iron-ore producer agreed to supply the natives with drinking water and clean up the river, a promise received with mistrust by the Krenak.

Many questions remain unanswered about the accident. What was the cause of the dams to collapse? How would the Krenak tribes be compensated? How would the Brazilian government and mining companies prevent such accident from happening again?

[SCMP, 29/11/2015]

INDIA

The world's most hazardous air quality

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently ranked India as the most hazardous on the planet in terms of air quality. Delhi has been shrouded in a toxic soup in recent weeks as winter sets in, cutting visibility and pushing PM 2.5 levels more than 10 times over the WHO's recommended safe limit.

Surrounded by major roads clogged with old trucks, the air quality at a bus terminus in Anand Vihar subur is far worse than the rest of Delhi. The life for street vendors and rickshaw drivers in that area is severely endangered.

Expert Anumita Roychowdhury said the elderly and children are most vulnerable, particularly those from poor families who live in areas of Delhi highly exposed to the particles.

Both the administration and the judiciary of the city are taking measures to alleviate the pollution problem. The Delhi government announcing this month cars will only be allowed on its congested roads on alternate days in January. The court barred the thousands of diesel trucks that storm through Delhi every night to avoid tolls on roads around the city en route to the rest of the country.

It seems that there is still a long way to go to achieve a pollution-free Delhi.

[SCMP, 20/12/2015]

Smog in China

Due to severe air pollution, citizens living in northern parts of China are forced to avoid outdoor activities.

Pollution in China has hit the headlines of many local and foreign newspapers in the last few weeks. Air pollution remained dangerously high in Beijing yesterday while surrounding cities and provinces escalated their alert levels as the northern parts of the mainland suffered some of its worst smog of the year.

On 8 December, the Beijing government escalated its "orange" alert to "red" - the first time the most severe warning had been issued since the four-tier system was adopted in 2013. According to Xinhua, at least 40 cities across the north have elevated air pollution alerts in place.

The issuing of a red alert does not immediately alleviate air pollution but it does pose a dilemma for many parents who must choose between staying at home with their children when classes are cancelled, or going to work, sometimes via a long commute on public transport because they are not permitted to drive.

Ms. Liu, a 62-year-old grandmother, said "we have to share a car with neighbours so both families can drive to school, as we have no other options."

As public health is a consideration, disruptions to daily life are tolerated by residents, who want the government to adopt even tougher measures to combat smog, despite the disruptions they caused.

[SMCP, 23/12/2015]

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Convictions under environmental legislation: October 2015 to January 2016 (February 2016 data not available)

[Note: the EPD no longer classifies second (and subsequent) offences.]

The EPD's summary of convictions recorded and fines imposed during the above period is as follows:

October 2015

Forty-six convictions were recorded in October 2015 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Ten of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 14 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, and 22 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in October was \$60,000, assessed against a company that imported waste for disposal without a permit for two counts.

November 2015

Thirty convictions were recorded in November 2015 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Nine of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 7 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 13 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, and 1 was under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in November was \$120,000, assessed against a company that used powered mechanical equipment otherwise than in accordance with permit conditions.

December 2015

Fifty-one convictions were recorded in December 2015 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Fourteen of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 4 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 1 was under the Ozone Layer Protection Ordinance, 29 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, and three were under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in December was \$45,000, assessed against a company that used powered mechanical equipment otherwise than in accordance with permit conditions.

January 2016

Sixty-one convictions were recorded in January 2016 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Nine of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 1 was under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance, 11 were under the Noise Control Ordinance,

and 40 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in January was \$40,000, assessed respectively against two companies that failed to comply with the requirements of a noise abatement notice, and imported controlled waste without a permit.

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