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Anger over stadium noise

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Communication problems were blamed as the Urban Council, the Government and Hong Kong Stadium's management company were yesterday accused by angry residents of "passing the buck" over the stadium's noise problem.

With about a week to go before another concert is staged at the controversial, billion-dollar stadium, a Tai Hang residents' representative, Chan Tak-ming, said he was disappointed that a meeting with urban councillors yesterday failed to reveal who should be held accountable.

He said taxpayers had a right to know who was responsible for the unacceptable noise levels during concerts, despite repeated warnings from the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) that the design of the stadium was not suitable for large pop concerts.

Chan said he met the assistant director of environmental protection, John Boxall, on Sunday and was told that EPD had pointed out the shortcomings of the stadium's design in response to two noise assessment reports submitted in late 1992 and April 1993.

He said the EPD had recommended the stadium was not suitable for big concerts on the basis of the reports.

But the two urban councillors Chan met, Stephen Lau and Fred Li, also a legislator, told him they had not seen the

reports compiled by the Jockey Club and the management consultants Wembley International.

Li said he was horrified to learn councillors had been kept in the dark about the reports.

"It's the first time I have heard of such a thing," he said.

He said he would discuss the issue with Boxall today.

Lau, also a member of the stadium's board of governors, refused to comment on the issue.

Two councillors, Elsie Tu and Man Sai-cheong, said they were unaware of the consultants' reports and the EPD's subsequent recommendations.

Man said the matter showed those concerned had known about the problems beforehand but had failed to address the issue.

The newly refurbished stadium has been plagued with controversy since its expensive gala opening earlier this month.

Complaints started flooding in from irate residents after a succession of pop concerts brought noise levels well above the 65 decibel limit prompting the department to serve the stadium's management with a noise abatement notice, giving them until April 10 to meet the required standards.

An urban councillor, Ronald Leung, has promised abatement measures will be implemented at the Canto-pop concerts planned for April 9 and 10.