

He said an overall review had been conducted by the City and New Territories Administration on the district constituency, the amount of expenditure by candidates in elections, the election ordinance, the level of allowance given to district board members and terms of reference of district boards.

On the management problems of multi-storey buildings in Hongkong, he said the findings of a pilot scheme in Yaumatti were being finalised and it was felt that some amendments to the existing legislation would be required to improve the situation.

And one of the significant proposals being considered is to provide a form of "subsidy" — a small amount given by the government to residents' bodies to cover the overheads in order to encourage them to take a more active role in building management.

"In addition, we are also considering strengthening existing legislation to give owners' incorporations more strength for enforcement," he said.

Mr Macpherson said the government was also thinking of removing some of the obstacles which might restrict the formation of owners' incorporations by residents to help building management.

At present, 50 per cent or more of the owners of a building are required to attend a meeting before they decide to form such a body.

But the problem is that for a building where the majority of the residents are tenants, it is virtually impossible to form an owners' incorporation and a mutual aid committee is set up instead.

The mutual aid committee only requires attendance of 20 per cent of residents, and they are not only confined to owners but also tenants.

But the MAC lacks a legal status in collecting management fees and it cannot take the tenants to court for those fees owed. As a result, these complications create many problems in building management.

To eliminate one of the stumbling blocks, Mr Macpherson said the government might cut the percentage required for owners to attend a meeting on the formation of an owners' incorporation.

He said the building management problem had been an issue for many years and he would not like to see it

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A bridge to better ties with Shenzhen

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drag on further.

"Certainly, the City and New Territories Administration and other departments are giving very high priority to the issue.

"I hope the amendment legislation will be introduced in the Legislative Council at its next session," he said.

Mr Macpherson also touched on the planned environmental clearance of structures on a pavement at Kinglam-street in Shamshui-po, which has sparked off a heated debate among district board members.

The members have urged the government to review the present policy of giving no compensation to commercial operators and domestic dwellers affected by the "environmental clearance."

But for those who have to make way for "development," they will be given compensation and accommodation.

Unfair

Many members regard the policy as being unfair to those cleared on environmental grounds and warn it could lead to confrontation and violence.

Mr Macpherson said any planned clearance would be deferred while the government was reviewing the policy.

"The district board does have quite a major role to play in this issue," he said.

Mr Macpherson disagreed with some criticisms that the government was not listening to suggestions by district boards.

He referred to two major incidents recently — the proposed scrapping of two bus routes in Yuenlong and the setting up of an off-course betting centre at a commercial complex in a Wongtaisin housing estate.

In both cases, district board members objected strongly to the proposed moves.

Mr Macpherson stressed that district boards had contributed a great deal in helping the government formulate policies.

And he insisted the government had taken into account the views of district board members before decisions were made.