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A failure to communicate...

By JULINA CHAN

The container lorry row has brought renewed accusations that the Government does not consult or listen to public opinion.

An Urban Councillor, Mr Lee Chik-yuet, said yesterday that in allowing the confrontation to develop, the Government had obviously not learned from the January taxi drivers' dispute.

He said it was fortunate that the container lorry operators had backed down at the last minute in view of the effect the licence fee dispute could have had on the territory.

Mr Lee said that although different in nature, the lorry

and taxi disputes arose from the same cause — an underestimation of the real situation, and a lack of communication between the two sides.

If the Government had consulted on or discussed the matter with those concerned before making a decision, the situation would have been different, he said.

Another Urban Councillor, Mr Pao Ping-wing, supported the Government for not bowing to unreasonable demands.

But he suggested the Government should in future release more information to the public when introducing new measures, to enable the people to decide who to support.

Mr Pao also blamed the present consultation process for the lack of communication.

He said the long-term solution would be to establish a democratic government, while the interim remedy was to improve consultation channels.

The chairman of Meeting Point, Mr Lau Nai-keung, said a responsible government should always stick to its principles.

"But the question is how the principles are set," he said.

A series of incidents, such as the electronic road pricing scheme and the taxi row, had revealed weaknesses in the decision-making process of

the Transport Department, he said.

Mr Lau also criticised the present consultation process, which he said offered no guarantee that public opinion would be listened to.

An Eastern District Board member, Mr Chum Ting-pong, said he appreciated the way the Government handled the row.

If the Government had kept on making concessions, this would have encouraged other interest groups to use the same tactics.

Mr Chum felt that the taxi drivers' victory earlier this year had stimulated other groups to resort to drastic action in times of disagreement.