

Members of the Liquor Licensing Board (LLB), led by Board Chairman Mr Stephen Yau, conducted a duty visit to Singapore from 21 to 24 October 2012. During the visit, they met the Chairman and members of the Liquors Licensing Board in Singapore and were briefed by the Police Licensing & Regulatory Department of the Singapore Police Force on the liquor licensing and regulatory regime in Singapore. Members also participated in night visits arranged by the Singapore authority to several entertainment outlets selling liquor to understand more about the operation of the business and the enforcement challenges.

Following the discussions on the observations from this visit, LLB considers that the liquor licensing regime of Singapore has inspired it to consider the following issues:

(A) Longer Duration of Liquor Licences

In Singapore, a liquor licence is normally granted for a term of 24 months, whereas a liquor licence in Hong Kong is valid for a maximum period of 12 months.

The Government conducted a public consultation between July and September 2011 to seek views from members of the public and the trade on the proposal for extension of the duration of liquor licences, which received strong support from the trade. However, some respondents were concerned that this trade facilitation measure might cause LLB to lose the opportunity to conduct annual reviews on the performance of the liquor-licensed premises. District Councils of those districts with a larger number of liquor-licensed premises also reflected that local residents had grave concerns about the nuisances caused by some of the premises. It was hoped that there would be stricter supervision over and law enforcement action against the liquor-licensed premises.

LLB and the Government are actively considering the feasibility of extending the duration of liquor licences as an encouragement to those properly operated premises.

(B) Licensing of Retail Liquor Stores

In Singapore, both the retail and wholesale of intoxicating liquor for consumption off-premises also require a liquor licence when there is no identical requirement in Hong Kong.

LLB proposes that the Government should consider introducing a licensing regime to regulate retail liquor stores. This may help amongst other issues, preventing minors from purchasing liquor. The introduction of such a licensing regime may provide a level playing field for the trade. Under the proposed regime, we may consider imposing certain licensing conditions to shorten the hours of liquor sales at 24-hour convenience stores, supermarkets, wine merchants and etc. This may help tackling the noise nuisance and other problems brought by drinking in public places late at night.

Since this proposal involves a wide spectrum of stakeholders, LLB understands that the Government must carefully examine its social impact and conduct extensive consultation with various sectors in the community.

(C) Introducing a Zoning System for Liquor Selling Premises

Singapore adopts a zoning system. Under the system, different zones are posed with different restrictions and conditions. LLB proposes that the Government should consider the proposal and introduce a zoning system for liquor selling premises.

LLB will continue to work with the Government to examine the feasibility of the proposals.

Vice-chairman of LLB, Mr Kong Wai-yeung, and Board members Mr Ko Chun-wa, Mr Wong Kit-lung, Dr James Wong, Mr Albert Young, Ms Winnie Fan, Mr Chris Ip and Ms Pearl Lam also took part in the duty visit.

They were joined by the Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food), Mr Christopher Wong; Senior Superintendent (Licensing) Ms Rita Yeung; and the Secretary of LLB, Mr Sheh Kai-kwong.



Discussion with Chairman of Liquors Licensing Board, Singapore



Discussion with officials of Singapore Police Force



Picture with officials of Singapore Police Force