

Legco warning on hub decision

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The Legislative Council's subcommittee on the West Kowloon cultural district is going to send a letter to Chief Executive Donald Tsang as well as senior officials demanding that they not make any final decision on the project until after they have responded to Legco's own proposals.

At Friday's subcommittee meeting, chairman Alan Leong warned a breakdown in communications between the executive and legislative appeared imminent and that should this happen, Tsang would have to accept full responsibility.

But it was Chief Secretary Rafael Hui who continued to come under fire from legislators, for rejecting earlier invitations to meet with committee members to discuss their views.

Hui had promised to attend a meeting before the end of March but unionist

Chan Yuen-han feared this could be after the Executive Council had finalized its decision on the project.

"We've been waiting for [Hui] and he's just playing games," she said.

Democratic Party vice chairman Albert Ho called on Tsang to "tell the chief secretary that he can't go before Legco after an irreversible decision has been made."

In addition to seeking a response to the subcommittee's two reports challenging the government's plans for the cultural complex, Leong sent a letter to Hui dated February 4 asking the administration to be more transparent about its exchanges with its supporters.

In his next letter to Hui, Leong said he will also ask the administration to address the issue of the site's true value.

"The government says it doesn't have a figure in mind, but that's kind of weird," said pro-Beijing legislator Choy So-yuk. "I feel they owe us an

answer to this question. How can you have a land auction without knowing how much the land is worth?"

Choy said that as the issue dragged on, the government and legislators were drifting further apart.

"I'm not too hopeful about the government's response," she said.

Ignoring the Legco invitation, Hui spent part of Friday afternoon at the ground-breaking ceremony of the Asia Society's upcoming permanent arts and culture center adjacent to Pacific Place.

Hui chuckled when Jockey Club chairman Ronald Arculli, speaking on the club's role in the project, said at the site of the former explosives magazine in Admiralty: "Although this isn't West Kowloon, this is an explosives magazine. I'm sure there are some in government who wish they could move the explosives to West Kowloon and blow the whole thing up."

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