

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)1787/02-03  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/MP/1

**Panel on Manpower**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Friday, 28 March 2003 at 10:45 am**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Chairman)  
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon SZETO Wah  
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

**Member attending** : Hon Margaret NG

**Members absent** : Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP  
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

**Public Officers attending** : Item III  
  
Mr Stephen IP, GBS, JP  
Secretary for Economic Development and Labour

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour)

Mrs DO PANG Wai-yee  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Development and Labour  
(Labour)

Mr Alvin LI  
Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Social)

Mr H Y CHEUNG  
Principal Economist  
Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau

Item IV

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour)

Mr TSANG Kin-woo, JP  
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services)

Item V

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour)

Mr Fred TING, JP  
Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health)

Dr Raymond LEUNG Lai-man  
Occupational Health Consultant

Item VI

Mr Philip CHOK, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Tony CHENG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

**Clerk in attendance** : Mrs Sharon TONG  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 1

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**Staff in attendance** : Ms Dora WAI  
: Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 4  
  
Mr Simon LI  
Research Officer 6  
(for item III only)

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**I. Confirmation of minutes of previous meetings and matters arising**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1462/02-03 and CB(2)1490/02-03)

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 January and 20 February 2003 were confirmed.

**II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1485/02-03(01) and (02))

2. Members agreed that the next meeting originally scheduled for 17 April 2003 be re-scheduled to 24 April 2003 at 2:30 pm to discuss the following items -

- (a) Review of the policy on foreign domestic helpers - proposal to impose a levy on employers of foreign domestic helpers;
- (b) Proposed withholding of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Medical Examinations) Regulation;
- (c) Employment training scheme for university graduates; and
- (d) Proposed amendments to the Apprenticeship Ordinance.

Guidelines on leave arrangements under circumstances related to atypical pneumonia

3. In view of the spread of atypical pneumonia (AP), members expressed concern about the leave arrangements for employees under the following circumstances -

- (a) in the case of an employee subjected to surveillance by the Department of Health (DH) under an isolation order;
- (b) in the case of an employee who was advised to be absent from the office because he had come into close contact with person(s) confirmed with AP infection or he had developed symptoms of AP, such as onset of fever, breathing difficulties, sore throat, cough and running nose; and

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- (c) in the case of an employee who was required to be absent from the office on grounds of suspension of service of his company due to case(s) of AP.

4. Members pointed out that the employees referred to in paragraph 3(a) to (c) above might not necessarily be infected with AP. Hence, the protection in respect of sickness allowance provided under the Employment Ordinance (EO) (Cap. 57) might not apply to them if they were subsequently confirmed to have no AP infection.

5. Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (SEDL) said that to reduce the chance of spreading the disease, those who had symptoms of AP or who had come into close contact with person(s) confirmed with AP infection were strongly advised not to return to work until they were confirmed to have no AP infection. He stressed that a safe and healthy working environment would not only safeguard the health of employees but would also protect the interests of employers.

6. SEDL hoped that employers would adopt an understanding approach in handling leave of their employees under circumstances related to AP. He took the opportunity to appeal to employers to pay sickness allowance to employees who were unable to report for duty for reasons referred to in paragraph 3(a) to (c) above. On the other hand, he encouraged employees to be self-disciplined and responsible in taking sick leave during this critical period.

7. SEDL informed members that the Government was in the process of compiling guidelines for the purposes of enhancing public awareness of the importance of a safe and healthy working environment, and providing advice to employers and employees on leave arrangements under circumstances related to AP. The guidelines, once finalised, would be widely published for the reference of employers and employees of all sectors.

8. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the catering industry had already discussed the issue and agreed that in-service workers who had flu-like symptoms or who lived with person(s) confirmed with AP infection should be advised to take leave. The latter should also report case(s) of AP to their employers. Arrangements in respect of payment for leave taken under circumstances related to AP had to be further discussed by the industry.

9. Mr Tommy CHEUNG further said that to prevent the spread of AP and reduce the chance of infection, the industry had also reached an agreement on the categories of workers who should wear facemasks during their course of work. Given that a majority of customers still resisted a phenomenon of restaurant staff wearing facemasks at work, he appealed to members of the public not to discriminate against this arrangement as it could better protect the health of workers of catering establishments as well as customers.

10. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that employers should allow employees to wear facemasks during their course of work if the latter so preferred. Employers should as far as possible provide facemasks to their employees with a view to reducing the chance of infection at work.

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11. SEDL said that the Government had made arrangements to provide facemasks for use by public schools, hospitals and Government departments. It had also launched announcements of public interest to promote public understanding of AP and the precautionary measures for the prevention of the spread of the disease.

12. Mr Andrew CHENG said that he was worried that existing legislation together with the guidelines to be issued might still not be able to provide adequate employment-related protection to employees who were absent from work by reason of an isolation order. He suggested that DH should provide these employees with medical certificates, recommending the granting of sick leave.

13. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah agreed that potential carriers of AP should stay away from their workplaces for the sake of public health. He expressed the view that the guidelines to be issued should set out explicitly leave arrangements under circumstances related to AP. He suggested that the following provisions in the EO should be included in the guidelines -

- (a) an employee's entitlement to sickness allowance could be accumulated up to a maximum of 120 paid sickness days;
- (b) the number of sickness days granted to an employee could be deducted from the total number of paid sickness days accumulated by him; and
- (c) the termination of employment of an employee for reasons related to AP would be an unlawful and unreasonable dismissal.

He added that the leave taken by employees in relation to AP might also be treated as annual leave subject to mutual agreement between the employers and employees concerned.

14. Ms LI Fung-ying considered that to reduce the chance of labour disputes, the guidelines should provide concrete information on leave arrangements for employees under circumstances related to AP. She suggested that details of the relevant departments which might offer further assistance to employers or employees, when required, should also be provided in the guidelines.

15. Mr Kenneth TING shared members' view that employees with symptoms of AP should not report to work so as to reduce the chance of spreading the disease. He took the opportunity to appeal to employers to grant paid sick leave to employees who were unable to go to work for reasons referred to in paragraph 3(a) to (c) above. He asked the Administration to consider amending the EO to provide protection to employees on this front. He also took the opportunity to express thanks to frontline medical and health care personnel for their efforts in coping with the tremendous workload arising from the treatment of patients infected with AP.

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16. The Chairman said that the Panel would write to convey members' gratitude to all medical and health care personnel for their devotion to the fight against AP. He urged the Administration to provide as much concrete information as possible in the guidelines on leave arrangements for employees under circumstances related to AP. He suggested that the Government should also render the best possible assistance to those who were in financial difficulties and had lost their jobs as a result of the outbreak of AP. He believed that with employers, employees and the Government working together, Hong Kong would be able to contain the spread of AP and win the battle against it.

*(Post-meeting note : On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman wrote a letter to the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food on 2 April 2003 requesting him to convey members' gratitude to the medical and health care personnel.)*

17. SEDL said that the hard times arising from the spread of AP had indeed provided a good opportunity for employers to show their concern and care about their employees. To set a good example on this front, the Administration agreed that civil servants who were absent from work by reason of an isolation order would be granted 10 days' paid sick leave.

18. SEDL pointed out that the introduction of amendments to the EO to cater for the granting of sickness allowance under special circumstances would require a period of time. In view of the urgency of the matter, the Administration considered that the issue of guidelines would best serve the purpose.

19. Miss Margaret NG learned that the Administration would seek the approval of the Finance Committee on 31 March 2003 for the creation of a new commitment of \$200 million to meet the additional funding requirements for the fight against AP. She hoped that the Administration could provide Members with more details of the expenditure items. SEDL undertook to convey the views of Miss NG to the bureaux and departments concerned.

**III. Review of the policy on foreign domestic helpers - proposal to reduce minimum allowable wage**

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1515/02-03(01), CB(2)1540/02-03(01), CB(2)1438/02-03(01), CB(2)1474/02-03(02) and (03), and the Legislative Council Brief (Ref: EDLB/LB/C/36/02))

20. The Deputy Chairman took the chair at this juncture.

21. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan pointed out that based on the figures provided by the Administration in Annex B to its paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1515/02-03(01)), the median monthly employment earnings of workers in elementary occupations and the monthly household income of families with foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) at the lower quartile of the household income distribution in 2002 had only dropped by approximately 7.1% and 5.2% respectively as compared with 1999. Against this

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background, he was dubious how the reduction of 10.9% of the minimum allowable wage (MAW) of FDHs as presently proposed had been arrived at.

22. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan further pointed out that certain economic indicators adopted in the 2003 review of the MAW of FDHs, such as the Consumer Price Index (A) and the unemployment rate, had not been used in previous reviews. It was also worth-noting that the revision of the MAW as presently proposed had been based on figures of the fourth quarter of 2002; whereas the figures of the third quarter of 1998 had been used when determining the appropriate level of the MAW in the last revision. The adjustment to the MAW under the last revision exercise had taken effect in the first quarter of 1999. He considered that to ensure fairness, the Administration should adopt the same principles in determining the appropriate level of the MAW in each revision exercise, and these exercises should preferably be conducted in the same quarter of each year.

23. SEDL said that the first quarter of 1999 was used as a reference point because the MAW was last adjusted then, while the fourth quarter of 2002 provided the latest figures available at the time of the review. There was no question of deliberately using the figures of two different quarters in 1999 and 2002 for conducting the 2003 review of the MAW. He said that the Administration had no objection to conducting future reviews of the MAW in the same quarter of each year.

24. SEDL further said that the Administration considered it appropriate to follow a well-trying mechanism in determining the appropriate level of the MAW of FDHs. In determining the level, reference would be drawn to a basket of economic indicators, which included the monthly household income, employment earnings of workers in comparable sectors, consumer price index and unemployment rate, etc. On the basis of these economic indicators, the Administration would take a broad judgment on the appropriate level of the MAW. He pointed out that the objective of the recent fine-tuning of the basket of economic indicators was to ensure that the more relevant and objective indicators were included for the purpose of reviewing the level of the MAW.

25. SEDL also pointed out that in reviewing the level of the MAW, the Administration had not consciously taken into account the depreciation of the currencies of major FDH-exporting countries vis-à-vis the Hong Kong dollar. In fact, the depreciation of the currencies of these countries had in effect increased the value of the take-home pay of FDHs. This showed the objectivity of the exercise. He assured members that the Administration would continue to adhere to the established principles and mechanism which had been in use over the years in determining the appropriate level of the MAW of FDHs.

26. Given that reference would be drawn to a comprehensive range of economic indicators in each review of the MAW of FDHs, Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Social) considered that the methodology currently adopted by the Administration in determining the level of the MAW was appropriate and reasonable.

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27. In response to Mr LEE Cheuk-yan's comment concerning the base of comparison, Principal Economist of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau said that since the last adjustment in the MAW was implemented in February 1999, it was not unreasonable, from the practical perspective, to use the first quarter of 1999 as the base for comparison with the fourth quarter of 2002. Yet in view of the concern about possible distortion caused by some seasonal factors, the figures on median monthly employment earnings of service workers and workers in elementary occupations for the first quarter of 1999 had been adjusted to exclude Chinese New Year bonus and double pay, and then compared with those figures for the fourth quarter of 2002. On this basis, the median monthly employment earnings of service workers and workers in elementary occupations likewise registered double-digit decreases, by 11% and 13% respectively between the two periods.

28. In response to Mr LEUNG Fu-wah's enquiry, Principal Economist of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau said that the Philippine Peso, Thai Baht and Indonesian Rupiah vis-à-vis the Hong Kong dollar had depreciated by 22%, 11% and 20% respectively between 1999 and 2002.

29. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah said that The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions was supportive of the proposal to reduce the MAW of FDHs by \$400, as he believed that the proposal would be conducive to promoting employment opportunities for local domestic helpers (LDHs). He also considered that the reduction of the MAW would not create substantial financial implications on FDHs.

30. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed reservations about the proposal because he was worried that the decline in the cost incurred by employers in employing FDHs might undermine their interest to engage the service of LDHs.

**IV. Strengthening assistance to the middle-aged unemployed to seek employment**

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1485/02-03(03))

31. Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour) (PSL) briefed members on two new employment programmes for the middle-aged job-seekers, namely the Re-employment Training Programme (the RT Programme) and the District Employment Programme (the DE Programme), as set out in the Administration's paper.

32. In reply to Ms LI Fung-ying's enquiry, PSL said that to ensure the best use of resources, job registrants already enrolled in other special employment assistance schemes would not be allowed to join the DE Programme.

33. Ms LI Fung-ying further enquired whether the Labour Department (LD), for the purpose of allowing flexibility in job placements under warranted situations, would assume a coordinating role over the placement of job-seekers registered under different schemes.



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34. PSL said that staff of LD would identify the employment needs of every job-seeker registered with LD and would arrange to provide suitable services to them having regard to their specific needs. For example, those who preferred to work near their residence or needed social services support would be referred to an appropriate non-government organisation (NGO) in the relevant district for follow-up under the DE Programme.

35. Ms Cyd HO enquired about the range of services to be provided by NGOs under the DE Programme, and whether these NGOs would require additional staffing for providing the services. She also enquired whether service fees to be paid to these NGOs would have implications on the allocation of their normal funding provisions. In addition, she asked about the liability of social workers appointed by the participating NGOs in case of labour disputes between employers and employees engaged under the DE Programme.

36. Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services) (AC for L (ES)) said that LD had conducted a briefing for the participating NGOs on the operation of the DE Programme. The main services to be provided to job-seekers by these NGOs were employment counselling, personalised placement services and, where necessary, social services support. These NGOs would also be responsible for identifying and canvassing job vacancies at district level. LD would work out the implementation details of the Programme in conjunction with NGOs.

37. PSL pointed out that the Hong Kong Council of Social Services also operated a job centre in Kowloon. In fact, a number of NGOs had been providing employment services to their clients. Some NGOs which had joined hands with the Government in running the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme had much experience in providing employment-related services. He said that the participating NGOs would require additional hands to provide the range of services to be offered under the DE Programme. The expenditure so incurred would be met by service fees to be paid to them by the Government. Their normal funding provisions would not be affected by their expenditure arising from the Programme.

38. AC for L (ES) said that since there would be an employment relationship between an employer and an employee engaged under the DE Programme, whoever made the respective placement arrangement would not be held liable in case of labour disputes between the employer and employee concerned. Should there be labour disputes, LD would render assistance to the relevant parties with a view to helping them resolve the matter. LD would also provide support services to the participating NGOs as and when required.

39. In reply to Ms Cyd HO's further enquiry, AC for L (ES) said that follow-up service would be provided to participants of the DE Programme for three months after job placement.

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40. Noting the Administration's intention to offer the DE Programme in areas with more serious problem of unemployment among the middle-aged, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah enquired whether the Administration had conducted any study to assess the number of job vacancies available in these areas. He also enquired why the Administration did not consider inviting labour unions to participate in the DE Programme. Besides, he asked whether there was any mechanism in place to prevent double payment of service fees to NGOs.

41. PSL said that eight districts where unemployment among the middle-aged was more serious had been identified, based on data from the Census and Statistics Department and information gathered by staff of LD. Information on the number of job vacancies available in these areas as collated through LD's employment service was also available. He pointed out that the major characteristic of the DE Programme was to enable the participating NGOs to explore new job opportunities at the district level, especially vacancies from employers of small businesses who were not frequent users of LD's recruitment service, through their established networks.

42. PSL further said that the DE Programme would initially be launched on a pilot basis. The Administration would welcome the participation of labour unions should there be an expansion of the Programme in future.

43. AC for L (ES) said that LD had all along been maintaining close ties with the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) in respect of the various employment assistance schemes offered by the three parties. This provided an effective mechanism to guard against duplication of resources among the various schemes operated by LD, SWD and ERB.

44. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung noted that the proposed training period under the RT Programme had been lengthened to three months as the one-month training period under the Re-employment Pilot Programme for the Middle-aged (the Pilot Programme) was considered to be too short. He asked about the basis for the argument that one month was too short a period for the respective training.

45. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung also noted that the aggregate training allowance to be received by employers under the RT Programme was \$4,500, which was much higher than \$2,800 granted under the Pilot Programme. Moreover, there was no guarantee that employers would continue to employ the trainees concerned after the three-month training period. In view of the above, he expressed worry that the RT Programme might provide a means for employers to acquire cheap labour.

46. PSL said that the Administration had consulted the views of employers and trainees who had participated in the Pilot Programme through various channels. Both employers and trainees alike considered that the one-month training period was too short for the latter to acquire the essential job-specific skills and to integrate into the new job. He added that since trainees of the RT Programme were likely to have been unemployed for a relatively longer period of time, the Administration considered it

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desirable and appropriate to allow them more time to adapt to the new working environment.

47. PSL pointed out that under the RT Programme, employers were required to offer full-time jobs to trainees with wages at market rate. They were also required to prepare training plans for trainees and assign experienced staff as their mentors. With the above requirements in place, he believed that the problem of cheap labour as cited by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung in paragraph 45 above would not occur. He added that the results of the Pilot Programme were encouraging, under which 40% of the trainees stayed in the same job three months after the placement.

Adm 48. At the request of Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, PSL undertook to provide information on the effectiveness of the Pilot Programme.

49. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that all the existing employment assistance schemes run by LD, SWD and ERB should be consolidated into one scheme and administered by a designated department with a view to avoiding the duplication of resources and achieving greater efficiency.

50. PSL considered that the introduction of a single employment assistance scheme for different groups of unemployed persons with varying background might pose rigidity. In his view, adopting a multi-faceted, multi-channelled, multi-pronged and diversified approach would help provide effective employment services to meet different needs of the unemployed. He stressed that with proper control over the schemes, the question of duplication of resources should not arise.

51. Members did not raise objection to the implementation of the two new employment programmes.

**V. Briefing on the commencement of the Occupational Safety and Health (Display Screen Equipment) Regulation**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1485/02-03(04))

52. PSL and Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health) (DC for L (OSH)) briefed members on the Administration's work in promoting the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health (Display Screen Equipment) Regulation and its proposal to bring the Regulation into operation in July 2003 as set out in its paper.

53. Mr Kenneth TING pointed out that the prices of liquid crystal display (LCD) monitors in recent years had become more reasonable. Nowadays, a LCD monitor only cost about \$1,000-odd. Users would find it convenient to use as it was light-weighted and easy to adjust to different angles to suit different needs. He believed that the use of LCD monitor could help enhance work efficiency and achieve cost effectiveness. He suggested that the Administration should provide more information on the use of LCD monitor for the reference of employers and employees.

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54. DC for L (OSH) said that the Administration was well aware that the advent of advanced technology had brought about significant improvements to a wide range of computer equipment. Indeed, the Government had shared this kind of information with employers and employees on different occasions, such as promotional visits, seminars and roving exhibitions. Respective information had also been provided in the Heath Guide on Working with Display Screen Equipment published by LD for reference by employers and employees.

**VI. Review of Project Yi Jin**

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1485/02-03(05))

55. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DSEM) briefed members on the outcome of the review of Project Yi Jin (the Project) and the Administration's proposal in respect of the future of the Project.

56. Ms Cyd HO noted that the tuition fee for taking all ten modules under the Project, after deducting the 30% reimbursement provided by the Government, was still as high as \$21,000 which, she believed, was unaffordable to many students. In view of this, she suggested that the eligibility requirement for full reimbursement of tuition fee, i.e. the total household income of a 4-member family should not exceed \$8,500, should be relaxed in order to help more needy students with financial difficulties.

57. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan shared the view of Ms Cyd HO. He considered that more resources should be allocated to education and training if the quality of local manpower was to be upgraded. He suggested that the Administration should consider providing 50% fee reimbursement for needy students under the Project as in the case of secondary school students.

58. DSEM said that the Project served as a bridging programme to provide an alternative route and to expand the continuing education opportunities for secondary school leavers and adult learners, thereby enabling them to obtain the necessary qualifications to further their studies or securing employment.

59. DSEM pointed out that the upper limit of \$8,500 applied to all student financial assistance schemes, and such limit was subject to annual review by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) after taking into account the relevant consumer price indices. He said that given the relatively low recognition of the Project when it was first launched in 2000, the Administration had introduced the 30% tuition fee reimbursement arrangement for the purpose of providing an incentive for students to enrol in the Project. In July 2002, arrangements had been made to provide 100% reimbursement to students with greater financial needs. Besides, students who could not afford to pay the tuition fee in advance might apply for financial assistance under the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme administered by SFAA. These students would be allowed to repay the loan in 10 years after they had completed the relevant courses under the Project.

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60. DSEM further said that after a detailed review, the Administration considered it desirable and appropriate to continue with the existing 30% reimbursement arrangement in view of the prevailing financial stringency. Under the existing arrangement, more training places could be provided so that more people would be able to benefit from the Project.

61. Ms LI Fung-ying said that she recalled that the Administration had agreed to discuss with the relevant course operators to explore ways to reduce the level of tuition fees for the Project. She enquired about the progress of the Administration's work in this regard.

62. DSEM responded that as the Project was run by the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE) on a self-financing basis, the Administration had held a number of discussions with FCE on the feasibility of lowering the level of tuition fees for the Project. He informed members that FCE was actively examining the issue but had not yet taken a decision on it.

63. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung learned that the Education and Manpower Bureau would cease to operate the evening adult education courses at primary and secondary levels currently run by the Bureau. The Bureau had advised that the affected adult learners might choose to take up courses under the Project. Given that the education level of some adult learners was below secondary level, he expressed doubt as to whether they would be able to manage the courses under the Project, which seemed to have been designed for secondary school leavers. He urged that proper articulation arrangements should be made to help the affected adult learners to enrol in courses that were suitable and affordable to them.

64. DSEM pointed out that apart from secondary school leavers, adult learners, irrespective of their education level, were also eligible to join the Project. In actual practice, adult students with low education attainment would also be admitted to education or training programmes which required higher academic qualifications because their experience and state of maturity were also important attributes in considering their suitability in taking up the courses.

65. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower said that the Administration was in the process of reviewing the programmes to be included under the Continuing Education Fund (CEF). Adult education providers would be encouraged to offer appropriate programmes under CEF. Once the programmes became accredited courses under CEF, students who had completed these programmes would be eligible to apply for 80% reimbursement of the respective course fees.

66. Ms Cyd HO pointed out that although the Administration had suggested that students of adult education courses might pursue continuing education through other programmes such as the Project, they, indeed, might have financial difficulties to enrol in the Project because of the high tuition fee. In view of the declining commitment of the Government in providing continuing education for adult learners, she suggested that

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the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of the subject on the basis that no one should be deprived of education for lack of means. She also suggested that the mode of operation of the Project and ways to reduce the level of its tuition fee should also be looked into when the subject was discussed by the Panel. The Deputy Chairman suggested that the issues raised by Ms HO be included in the list of outstanding items for discussion by the Panel.

**VII. Any other business**

67. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
23 April 2003