

立法會
Legislative Council

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LC Paper No. CB(2)1694/03-04

(These minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Panel on Manpower

**Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 12 February 2004 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
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 Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
- Member attending** : Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
- Members absent** : Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

**Public Officers : Item III
attending**

Dr WONG Fook-yee
Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Country and Marine Parks)

Mr Donald TONG Chi-keung
Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
(Administration and Development)

Mr TSE Man-shing
Assistant Director of Home Affairs (Administration)

Dr W M KO
Director (Professional Services and Public Affairs)
Hospital Authority

Mr Johnny WOO Wai-man
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Leisure Services)

Mr CHEUNG Hing-wah
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth and Corrections)

Ms Kinnie WONG
Assistant Commissioner for Tourism

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

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

Mrs DO PANG Wai-yee
Assistant Commissioner for Labour
(Policy Support and Strategic Planning)

Item IV

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

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

Item V

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

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

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Amy WONG
: Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 1

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I. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting and matters arising
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1154/03-04)

Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2003 were confirmed.

Matters arising - Duty visit to the Republic of Korea

2. The Chairman informed members that the Korean Consulate in Hong Kong had agreed to co-ordinate the visit programme and advised that the Ministry of Labour would receive the delegation. However, as the proposed visit dates from 12 to 16 April 2004 would coincide with the general election in Korea, members might wish to consider postponing the visit to early May.

3. After discussion, members agreed to postpone the visit to 9 to 12 May 2004. The Legislative Council Secretariat would inform the Korean Consul in Hong Kong and proceed with the preparatory work.

Clerk

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II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1219/03-04(01) and (02))

4. Members agreed that the following items proposed by the Administration be discussed at the next meeting to be held on 18 March 2004 at 2:30 pm -

- (a) Revamping the labour inspection service to strengthen protection of employees' rights and benefits;
- (b) Occupational diseases: trends and prevention; and
- (c) Establishment of a qualifications framework and its associated quality assurance mechanism.

III. Extension of temporary jobs

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1219/03-04(03))

Briefing by the Administration

5. Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour) (PSL) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to extend 11 700 temporary jobs at an estimated cost of about \$874 million. PSL said that of these jobs, some 3 500 or 30% were for youths and the remaining were for other age groups, primarily the middle-aged. He added that the various employment initiatives announced since 2000 had created 29 800 low-skilled temporary jobs. Of these, some 6 400 jobs had expired by November 2003 and about 18 900 would expire by end-March 2004. The decision to extend some 11 700 jobs was made after careful consideration of operational needs by the relevant departments and Hospital Authority.

6. PSL further said that the Labour Department (LD) would, together with the host departments and non-government organisations (NGOs), provide assistance to those whose temporary jobs would not be extended. In addition, those who were eligible could join the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS). Those interested in self-employment might consider joining the Youth Self-employment Support Scheme (Scheme). Other measures to help adult job seekers included the Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged and the Local Domestic Helpers Incentive Allowance Scheme. Furthermore, funding for public works projects would be increased to \$29 billion each year in the coming five years, thereby providing job opportunities for about 41 000 construction workers each year. He believed that with the improvement in economy and labour market, there would be more jobs opportunities.

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7. PSL added that an employment fair with about 2 900 vacancies would be held at the Central Library on 27 February 2004. A special job fair for youths would also be held at the Elizabeth Stadium on 7 April 2004.

8. The Chairman invited the departments' representatives to brief members on the number of temporary jobs not extended and the reason(s) for that.

Hospital Authority

9. Director (Professional Services and Public Affairs) Hospital Authority (D/HA) informed members that the only temporary jobs which were not included in this exercise were the 80 workers employed for the pilot transport scheme for the elderly and handicapped, as their contracts would not expire until March 2005. He added that a review would be conducted then to decide whether these jobs would need to be extended.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

10. Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Administration and Development) said that about 1 800 temporary jobs would not be extended as at end-February 2004. These were primarily cleaners whose contract would not be extended due to reduction in operational needs, the Department's streamlining of the provision of environmental hygiene services together with more public support after increasing the fixed penalty for committing cleanliness offences.

Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department

11. Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Country and Marine Parks) said that for the 967 temporary workers employed on a six-month contract to provide cleansing and maintenance services, 280 would be extended for one year while 687 would not be extended because of no operational need.

Tourism Commission

12. Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (ACT) said that the temporary jobs of Tourism Development Assistants (TDAs) were created in August 2003 in response to the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). While 205 TDAs would be extended for another six months, 2 800 would not be extended because of no operational need.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

13. Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Leisure Services) said that out of the 1 350 places for youth training jobs, only 875 were filled up due to the unpopularity of some of the training programmes. Among these 875 jobs, 549 would

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be extended. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department would concentrate on the popular training programmes and try to have all 1 350 places filled up. Another 800 temporary jobs would be extended to continue cleansing service for the public leisure venues.

Home Affairs Department

14. Assistant Director of Home Affairs said that 1 500 temporary jobs had been created in response to the outbreak of SARS. Of these, 1 000 were coordinated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service under the Positive Life Project and 500 were employed by the Home Affairs Department for community development and building management. With the improvement in economic outlook, the need for these 1 500 jobs had subsided and they would not be extended upon expiry of contract. For the other 662 live jobs created under the Initiatives for Wider Economic Participation which was announced in the 2000 Policy Address, 358 of them would be extended. The 304 jobs not extended were primarily jobs for village representative elections and voter registrations which had already taken place.

Social Welfare Department

15. Assistant Director of Social Welfare said that 4 567 temporary jobs would not be extended. Of these, 4 500 were for the programme of Operation Care which aimed to provide household cleansing and minor repair services for the elderly and had completed in August and November 2003 respectively. The needy elderly would be duly followed up by elderly services units at district level. The other 67 jobs not extended were primarily marketing and research/information technology work performed for Social Welfare Department. Due to redeployment of internal resources, the retention of these jobs was considered unnecessary.

Discussions

16. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that the reasons for creating these temporary jobs were to ease the unemployment problem and to improve environmental hygiene in response to the outbreak of SARS. Since the unemployment rate was still high and the risk of having SARs cases should not be neglected, he queried why all these temporary jobs could not be retained. He further pointed out that the job vacancies available at the various job fairs organised by LD could not match the 7 000 temporary jobs terminated. Mr LEUNG urged the Administration to retain these jobs. Otherwise, the workers might have to apply for comprehensive social security assistance which might entail more money on the part of the Government.

17. PSL responded that all temporary jobs had a time limit and would be discontinued eventually. Whether or not temporary jobs would be extended was a decision of individual departments having regard to operational needs. In view of the

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Government's fiscal deficit, the cost for extending the 11 700 temporary jobs for one year was a significant commitment of the Government. He believed that when the economy and labour market continued to improve, there would be more job opportunities in the private sector. For those whose contracts would not be extended, LD would make every effort to help them find jobs. He added that the number of job vacancies received by LD after the Chinese New Year was substantial and this was encouraging.

18. The Chairman asked whether follow-up services were provided to the workers whose contract had not been extended.

19. PSL said that LD did not have individual file for each individual worker. However, LD was most willing to help them seek employment when they approached LD.

20. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan shared the view of Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung. He said that if the Administration was confident that the private sector could absorb all the temporary workers, LD could conduct a registration for these workers and do the job matching. Regarding TDAs, Mr LEE said that some TDAs had reflected to him that the six-month experience was not useful in finding jobs. He urged the Administration to explore other proactive means to assist the TDAs in getting a permanent job in the tourism industry. As a transitional arrangement, TDAs could be placed under YWETS.

21. PSL responded that LD was willing and prepared to provide comprehensive employment services to those in need.

22. ACT said that according to the plan of the Project, 3 000 TDA jobs had been created, and a cumulative of 3 650 youths had been employed. About 2 400 TDAs were employed as at the end of January 2004. Both class-room and practical training were provided to TDAs. TDAs were able to acquire the basic knowledge and skills in the field of tourism that were useful in equipping them in finding permanent jobs in the tourism and related sectors.

23. In response to the Chairman, ACT said that 205 TDAs, primarily from land border control points, would be extended. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan urged the Administration to retain as many TDAs as possible and deployed them to major tourist spots in other programmes like ecological tour.

24. Ms LI Fung-ying said that with the unemployment problem remained unsolved, there was no reason why the Administration should terminate some of the temporary jobs. She urged the Administration to review the extension of temporary jobs from a wider perspective, instead of just focusing on the financial implications. She queried why extension of temporary jobs in the Housing Department (HD) was not covered in this exercise.

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25. PSL said that due to fiscal deficit, the departments had to review their own practical needs in extending the temporary jobs. Of the 7 000 jobs to be discontinued at the end February 2004, most of them were for youths. Those who were eligible could join YWETS. Other support services would also be provided. He stressed that the purpose of the temporary jobs was to equip the youths and prepare them to seek permanent employment. The role of the Government was to promote and not to provide employment.

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26. Regarding temporary jobs in HD, PSL said that as HD was financially autonomous, it was not included in this exercise. PSL agreed to provide information on the extension of temporary jobs by HD for members' reference.

27. Miss LI Fung-ying asked about the follow-up support services to be provided to the temporary workers whose contract would not be extended. She also asked whether assistance could be rendered to them to attend job fairs.

28. PSL responded that the departments and contractors concerned had been requested to facilitate the temporary workers to attend the employment fairs as far as possible.

29. Mr Andrew CHENG expressed disappointment over the financial management philosophy of the Government. He commented that the Government was too lax in the recent property deal with the land developer and too generous in spending on fireworks and the Hong Kong Harbour Fest, but too stringent in providing resources for job creation. Fiscal deficit as the reason for not extending some of the temporary jobs was not convincing. While the unemployment rate was still high and there was still risk of having cases of SARs in Hong Kong, he failed to see why the temporary jobs could not be retained.

30. Mr Ambrose LAU welcomed the proposal to extend the 11 700 temporary jobs. He asked whether there were other departments which had requested for extension of temporary jobs or additional temporary jobs but were not included in the proposal. He also asked whether the Administration had assessed the effectiveness of these temporary jobs in contributing to the efficiency of the departments.

31. PSL said that besides HD which was financially autonomous, the Department of Health was not included as it had not made its request. He stressed that the extension of temporary jobs was the decision of the departments concerned based on their operational needs. He further said that the assessment of effectiveness of temporary job would be done by individual departments.

32. Mr Michael MAK queried whether the departments were asked to have regard to the issue of fiscal deficit when reviewing the need for extending the temporary

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jobs. The Chairman asked whether the departments could apply for additional manpower should there be operational need.

33. PSL pointed out that the aim of the exercise was to extend the temporary jobs and not to create new jobs. The Economic Development and Labour Bureau was only playing a co-ordinating role. In extending the temporary jobs, the departments had been asked to review their operational needs. No pre-conditions or guidelines in terms of fiscal deficit were given.

34. In response to Mr Michael MAK, PSL said that the performance of temporary workers was evaluated by the departments concerned.

35. Ms Cyd HO considered that there was a need for the temporary jobs to help clear up the backlog of work in some departments. Ms HO asked, setting aside the fiscal deficit problem, whether a department could employ the temporary hands scrapped by other departments not requiring their service. She also asked D/HA to review whether the Hospital Authority would require additional temporary manpower.

36. PSL reiterated that even at a time of fiscal deficit, the Government would commit some \$800 million to extend the temporary jobs. Whether or not the jobs would be extended was the decision of the departments concerned based on their operational needs. There was no question of imposing any ceiling on the departments.

37. Mr FUNG Kin-kee agreed that temporary jobs without operational needs should be deleted. He queried whether the envelope system for operating expenditure was a constraint in extending the temporary jobs.

38. PSL responded that separate funding would be sought for extending these temporary jobs. The issue of the envelope system for operating expenditure did not come into play.

39. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed support for the proposal to extend the temporary jobs.

40. Mr Andrew CHENG asked the Administration to consider raising the funding sought so as to accommodate all the temporary jobs.

41. Mr SZETO Wah expressed support for the Administration's proposals in principle. He urged the Administration to review the effectiveness of the various programmes.

42. In summing up, the Chairman urged the departments concerned to further review their needs with a view to extending as many more temporary jobs as possible.

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43. PSL took note of members' views and would discuss with the departments after the meeting.

IV. Extension of Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1219/03-04(04))

44. In introducing the Administration's paper, PSL said that in view of its success and strong support from the community, the Administration proposed to extend YWETS for another two years to place another 10 000 young people into employment. Funding approval for \$300 million would be sought.

45. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested combining YWETS, the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the employment counseling service all into one scheme. To upgrade the skills of the youth, he considered that the training element in YWETS should be strengthened. Mr LEE sought clarification on the meaning of placing 11 094 trainees in training vacancies and another 7 682 trainees were able to find jobs referred to in paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper.

46. PSL said that out of these some 19 000 trainees, 11 094 had been placed into jobs under YWETS. An allowance was given to the employers of these trainees. 7 682 trainees who had participated in YWETS were able to find jobs in the open market with the assistance of their case managers.

47. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that the success of YWETS should not be measured against the number of trainees placed under YWETS. Rather, it should be assessed as to whether the employers would continue to employ the trainees after completion of YWETS. He asked whether the Administration had conducted any follow-up study among trainees after they had completed YWETS.

48. PSL said that the Hong Kong Polytechnic University had been engaged to conduct another study to provide some preliminary statistics about trainees after completing YWETS. The study was expected to be completed in mid-July this year.

49. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the success of YWETS should also depend on how long the trainees stayed in the job. He pointed out that YWETS did not seem to work well in the catering industry. He hoped that the Government would work with the trade to attract more trainees to enter the catering industry.

50. PSL said that the catering industry had always posed a challenge for YWETS probably due to the long working hours of the industry. The Administration had made efforts to promote the prospects in working in the industry. The Administration would continue to work with the catering industry.

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51. Ms LI Fung-ying expressed support for extending YWETS. She, however, expressed concern that there was some negative labelling effect on the “Action S4” project trainees in finding jobs. She asked the Administration to consider ways to promote the positive aspects of the project.

52. PSL responded that the Administration would discuss with the participating NGOs with a view to addressing the concern of Ms LI.

53. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed support for the extension of YWETS for two years. He, however, was concerned about the way forward in respect of YWETS after two years.

54. PSL said that the Administration would review YWETS, taking into consideration the outcome of the study by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University referred to in paragraph 48 above.

55. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed support for YWETS. She was, however, concerned that trainees might not be able to find jobs in the open market. She urged the Administration to adopt long-term policy to address the problem of unemployment. She considered that the Government should make use of the business opportunities brought about by the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and the Individual Visit Scheme of the Mainland to develop new economic activities and create more permanent jobs for the local workers.

56. PSL agreed to convey to the Economic and Employment Council the views of Miss CHAN.

57. Mr Andrew CHENG asked about the number of places under the projects referred to in paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper. He also asked whether the work experience gained by the youth in YWETS could be recognised in their further studies.

58. PSL said that the special employment projects had been tailor-made for the youths with the following number of vacancies created -

- (a) the “IT Seeds” with 950 places;
- (b) the School Activities and Administrative Assistant Project with 190 places;
- (c) the Airport Ambassadors with 160 places;
- (d) the special employment project for the creative and arts performance industries with 100 places;
- (e) the Travel Pioneer with 350 places ;
- (f) the Sports Instructor Trainees with 100 places;
- (g) the Action S4 project with 250 places and

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- (h) the Youth Work Experience and Skills Enhancement Programme for the Manufacturing Industry with 300 places.

V. Pilot scheme to promote self-employment for the youth
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1219/03-04(05))

59. Mr Andrew CHENG considered that resources should be deployed to helping the young people to secure work experience, rather than to assist them in starting a business.

60. PSL clarified that the objective of the Scheme was to equip the trainees with the skills to become self-employed. The Scheme would not provide any start-up capital support to trainees. The NGOs would provide a full range of facilities and administrative support to the trainees.

61. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed support for the Scheme. She suggested that the NGOs could approach the business sector and make the Scheme a long term venture. She suggested that the Tamar site could be used for some creative workshops.

62. PSL responded that the Administration would strengthen liaison with the business sector.

VI. Any other business

63. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:50 pm.