

Panel on Financial Affairs

List of outstanding items for discussion

(Position as at 27 April 2006)

Proposed timing for discussion at Panel meeting

1. Briefing by the Financial Secretary on Hong Kong's latest overall economic situation

The Panel has invited the Financial Secretary to brief the Panel and all other LegCo Members on macro economic issues on a periodic basis since mid-1999. The next briefing will be held at the Panel meeting in June.

June 2006

2. Impact of branch closure by banks on the public

When the Panel was briefed at its meeting on 6 February 2006 on the work of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, some members raised concern about the impact of branch closure by banks on the public. Noting that the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) would establish a working group to look into ways to alleviate the effects of branch closure and facilitate access to service, members agreed that representatives of HKAB and the Consumer Council be invited to a meeting of the Panel to discuss the subject.

July 2006

At the Panel meeting held on 6 March 2006, members noted that HKAB's working group had first met on 22 February 2006 and would meet again in the end of March. Given that the working group had not yet come up with any concrete proposals, it might not be ready to discuss with the Panel on the subject at the meeting in April. After discussion, members agreed that the subject be scheduled for discussion at the Panel meeting on 4 May 2006. Given HKAB's further advice that its working group needed more time to look into the subject and it aimed to discuss the subject with the Panel in July, members subsequently agreed at the meeting on 3 April 2006 that the subject be scheduled for discussion at the meeting on 3 July 2006.

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3. Proposal to write off a judgement debt

At the Panel meeting held on 6 June 2005, members were briefed on the Administration's proposal to write off the judgement debt owed to the Government by an auctioneer hired by the former Government Supplies Department to conduct commercial disposal of unserviceable or obsolete government stores and confiscated goods which was considered irrecoverable. Members expressed concerns about actions taken by the Administration to recover the outstanding payments from the auctioneer and details of the Administration's internal investigation on the case including the disciplinary proceedings taken against the involving civil servants. It was agreed that the Panel would further discuss the proposal in due course after the Administration had provided the supplementary information requested by members.

To be confirmed

The Administration plans to further consult the Panel on its proposal to write off the judgement debt in due course and then seek the approval of the Finance Committee on the proposal.

4. Briefing on the draft Companies (Amendment) Bill 2006

The Companies (Amendment) Bill 2006 aims to enable the introduction of a scripless securities market allowing securities to be issued and transferred electronically. The Bill has been included in the Legislative Programme 2005-06 provided by the Administration in October 2005.

To be confirmed

As advised by the Administration on 24 November 2005, the SFC is considering the way forward and the corresponding legislative amendments, and will brief the Panel on the way forward in due course.

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5. Consultancy study on the feasibility of establishing insurance Policyholders' Protection Funds in Hong Kong

The Administration commissioned a consultancy study on the feasibility of establishing Policyholders' Protection Funds (PPFs) in Hong Kong in late 2002 and conducted a consultation exercise from December 2003 to March 2004 to invite public views on whether and how PPFs should be introduced in Hong Kong.

To be confirmed

At the Panel meeting on 1 March 2004, members were briefed on the findings of the consultancy study and proposed PPF options. The Administration undertook to consult the Panel on the way forward after the public consultation exercise.

According to the Administration's written reply dated 28 March 2006, the consultant is expected to submit its final report within the coming financial year. Upon receiving the final report from the consultant, the Government will consider the way forward taking into account latest international regulatory development, implication for the work of the Insurance Authority and impact on the industry and community.

6. Consultancy study on the supervisory framework of the assets of long term insurers in Hong Kong

In October 2003, the Administration commissioned the consultancy study to examine the effectiveness of the current supervisory framework and to assess the need for further enhancement of the current framework for the protection of policyholders in Hong Kong.

To be confirmed

As advised by the Administration on 24 November 2005, the Consultant is undertaking a detailed study of various possible options for enhancing the asset safeguarding mechanism and asset valuation framework. According to current work progress, it is expected that the Consultant could finalize a Third Report and start drafting a public consultation paper for consideration by the C of I in the next few months. The Administration is keeping in view the progress of the

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consultancy study and will brief the Panel once it is ready to do so.

7. Scheme for outsourcing summary bankruptcy cases

The purpose of the Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill 2004 is to empower the Official Receiver to outsource debtor-petition summary bankruptcy cases to private-sector insolvency practitioners. The Bills Committee on Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill 2004 requested the Administration to review the outsourcing scheme after implementation of the scheme. The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury undertook in his speech during the resumption of the Second Reading debate on the Bill at the Council meeting on 6 July 2005 that the Administration would review the outsourcing scheme 24 months after implementation of the scheme and report the outcome of the review to the LegCo.

To be confirmed

The Administration has been invited to report the outcome of the review to the Panel in due course.

8. Introduction of a new category of “travel insurance agents”

At the Panel meeting held on 4 July 2005, members were briefed on the Administration’s proposal to introduce a new category of “travel insurance agents” to facilitate travel agents to be registered as insurance agents for the sale of travel insurance. Members expressed reservation on whether the proposal was the best option to achieve the policy objective of encouraging Hong Kong people to take out travel insurance before they travel. The Administration was requested to give further thought to the proposal and consider how the grave concern expressed by the insurance intermediaries could be addressed.

To be confirmed

At the Panel meeting held on 5 December 2005, members were briefed on the progress of the proposal. Members noted that the insurance industry had accepted the proposal after further discussion with the Administration. The Administration was requested to report to the Panel on the

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implementation of the “travel insurance agents” registration system about one year after the implementation of the system, including information on the number and percentage of travel agents who have passed the “Travel Insurance Agents Examination” and registered under the system, and the Administration’s assessment of the effectiveness of the registration system and the impact of the system on the professional standards of insurance intermediaries.

9. Proposal on sale and outsourcing of the funding and administration of loans made to students

At the Panel meeting held on 5 January 2006, the Administration briefed Members on its plan to sell off the portfolio and outsource the funding and administration of non means-tested student loans to the private sector. Given the possible impact of the proposal on the students having loans under the two non-means tested loan schemes concerned, Members urged the Administration to consult the Panel on Education (Education Panel) and relevant student bodies on the proposal before reverting to the Panel.

To be confirmed

When the subject was discussed at the special meeting of the Education Panel held on 26 January 2006, the following motion was passed:

“本委員會反對政府將免入息審查學生貸款出售和外判予私營機構，並要求政府盡快完成檢討整個學生貸款計劃，以達至協助有需要之學生完成學業，而不至於畢業後長期負債。”

(English translation)

“That this Panel opposes the sale of the Government’s non-means-tested student loan portfolio and the outsourcing of the funding and administration of these loan schemes to the private sector, and requests that the overall review of all student loan schemes be completed expeditiously for the purpose of providing assistance to the needy students to enable them to finish their studies without having to repay debts over a prolonged period of time after graduation.”

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discussion at Panel
meeting**

10. Review of the Personalized Vehicle Registration Marks Scheme

At the request of the Bills Committee on Revenue (Personalized Vehicle Registration Marks) Bill 2005, the Administration undertook to conduct an overall review of the captioned Scheme one year after its implementation and report the outcome of the review to the relevant Panel. The Bills Committee has referred the issue to the Panel for follow-up action.

To be confirmed

The Administration has been invited in February 2006 to report the outcome of the review to the Panel in due course. In its written reply dated 2 March 2006, the Administration advises that it would be able to report to the Panel in the first quarter of 2008. The Administration's reply was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1138/05-06 on 22 March 2006.

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