

**Excerpts from the minutes of meeting between
Legislative Council Members and Central & Western District
Council members on 1 February 2007**

Members present : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP (Convenor)
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon CHIM Pui-chung

Attendance by invitation : **Central & Western District Council**

Mr CHAN Tak-chor, MH, JP (Chairman)
Mr CHAN Chit-kwai, Stephen, JP
Mr CHAN Chi-hi
Ms CHENG Lai-king
Mr CHUNG Yam-cheung
Ms HO Sau-lan, Cyd
Dr LAI Kwok-hung
Mr Mark LIN, JP
Mr TAI Cheuk-yin
Mr YUEN Bun-keung

Staff in attendance : Miss Erin TSANG
Chief Council Secretary (1)3

Ms Guy YIP
Council Secretary (1)1

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II. Request to designate Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a general holiday in Hong Kong

2. Mr CHAN Chit-kwai remarked that the birthday and the date of death of Dr SUN Yat-sen had been designated as school holidays in the past but were abolished quite a number of years ago. Under the existing policy of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), schools might decide for themselves whether or not to designate Dr SUN's birthday as a school holiday. In his view, the policy reflected that the Government attached no importance to Chinese history education and that it had overlooked the great contribution Dr SUN had made to the Chinese nationality. In this connection, C&WDC had discussed the subject of "Designating Dr SUN Yat-sen's Birthday as a General Holiday in Hong Kong" at its meeting on 23 November 2006. C&WDC members noted at

the meeting that the designation of general holidays involved a spectrum of aspects, including labour issues. Hence, if Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday was to be designated as a general holiday in Hong Kong, the Administration would need to conduct extensive consultation, and to consider whether or not and how to change the existing policy on general holidays, i.e. a maximum of 17 days a year. Mr CHAN opined that even if it was not feasible to include an additional general holiday to commemorate Dr SUN's birthday due to technical issues, the Administration should still consider designating the date as a school holiday to strengthen national consensus and enhance students' knowledge in Chinese history.

3. Mr TAI Cheuk-yin remarked that as the great man who established the first republic in Asia, Dr SUN Yat-sen enjoyed high reputation in history. In his view, even though there were many cultural relics in Hong Kong that were related to Dr SUN (such as Dr SUN Yat-sen Museum and Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail), and C&WDC had all along been actively promoting activities commemorating Dr SUN, the Administration should still actively consider designating Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a general holiday so as to effectively advocate the spirit of Dr SUN. Given that designating Dr SUN's birthday as a general holiday would affect the existing arrangement for general holidays, Mr TAI opined that subject to public views, the Administration might consider taking an incremental approach by designating Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a school holiday in the first place, with a view to nurturing students' national consensus and enhancing their knowledge and objective evaluation of Chinese history. He also considered that the different evaluation of Dr SUN Yat-sen and the ways to commemorate him in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan duly reflected the ideas of "one country, two systems", "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong", "a high degree of autonomy", as well as the upholding of the policy and spirit of seeking common ground while reserving differences. Hence, should the Administration designate Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a general holiday, it would reflect how highly Hong Kong appraise Dr SUN. As such, he hoped that LegCo Members would support C&WDC's proposal and conduct extensive consultation on the proposal.

4. Ms CHENG Lai-king also pointed out that C&WDC had all along been sparing no efforts in preserving the trails of Dr SUN Yat-sen in the district by establishing the Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail and promoting the Dr SUN Yat-sen Museum which was opened at the end of last year. As mentioned above, Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday had been designated as a holiday in the past, she hoped that the Administration would consider re-designating Dr SUN's birthday as a general holiday so as to enhance the new generation's knowledge about Dr SUN Yat-sen.

5. In this connection, Mr CHAN Tak-chor, Chairman of C&WDC, informed the meeting that while supporting in principle the designation of Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a general holiday in Hong Kong, C&WDC also noted that the proposal might involve an increase in the existing number of

statutory holidays and thus extensive discussion and consultation among the community would be required. In this connection, C&WDC considered that as Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday was once a school holiday in Hong Kong, the Administration could consider requesting schools to re-designate Dr SUN's birthday as a school holiday.

6. Referring to the written response provided by the Economic Development and Labour Bureau before the meeting, the Convenor said that the current arrangement for general holidays was determined after intensive public consultation as well as endorsement by the LegCo. All general holidays were to mark important festivals or commemorative events or were related to religion. None of the holidays was designated for the purpose of commemorating an individual. As for EMB, it pointed out in its response that schools had the discretion to set Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a school holiday. As such, the Convenor considered that as schools currently had three discretionary holidays, as one of the feasible ways to commemorate Dr SUN Yat-sen, consideration could be given to encouraging schools to set Dr SUN's birthday as a school holiday.

7. Hon Martin LEE expressed appreciation for the contribution Dr SUN Yat-sen made to the Chinese nationality. He also remarked that if a general holiday was to be designated to commemorate a Chinese, Dr SUN Yat-sen should be the best choice. In this connection, he recalled that the person concerned had strived hard for many years before he could finally persuade the Administration to implement the proposal to designate the Buddha's birthday as a general holiday. The then arrangement was to cut the Easter Holidays by one day so that the Buddha's birthday could be designated as a general holiday. As such, he considered that if Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday was to be designated as a general holiday, C&WDC might similarly have to strive for a long time before the relevant proposal could be implemented. As regards the technical arrangements, he considered that one feasible way was to cut the other existing general holidays (such as the Christmas Holidays or the Lunar New Year Holidays) by one day to allow for the designation of Dr SUN's birthday as a general holiday. However, he supplemented that if the relevant proposal could be implemented, it would become a precedent for designating a general holiday for the purpose of commemorating an individual. The relevant arrangement might in future be used by others as an example and request the Administration to designate a general holiday to commemorate other individuals such as Mr MAO Zhedong, the late President of the People's Republic of China.

8. Hon Jeffrey LAM shared the views of C&WDC members and considered that the contribution made by Dr SUN Yat-sen to the Chinese nationality was beyond dispute. As such, he agreed that schools should be mobilized to designate Dr SUN's birthday as a school holiday. However, regarding the question of whether or not Dr SUN's birthday should be designated as a general holiday, he opined that the relevant parties should take the issue with prudence given that as a meeting point of Chinese and Western cultures, the

existing number of general holidays designated to cater for various Chinese and Western festivals and religious beliefs in Hong Kong already exceeded those of other countries. Moreover, some religious organizations had also been striving actively for designating their commemorative days as general holidays in Hong Kong. He therefore considered that instead of considering whether or not to designate Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a general holiday, the Administration should conduct an overall review of the current arrangements for general holidays, with a view to striking a more effective and suitable balance between the needs of the relevant parties.

9. Hon CHIM Pui-chung, however, considered that the proposal for sparing one day from the existing general holidays for the commemoration of Dr SUN Yat-sen might not have sufficient grounds and would require extensive public consultation. As such, the Government might not be willing to implement C&WDC's relevant proposal. Nevertheless, he supported that EMB should be urged to designate Dr SUN's birthday as a school holiday.

10. In concluding the discussion on the subject, the Convenor remarked that any changes to the existing arrangement for general holidays would involve a spectrum of aspects, including public consultation, amending existing legislation, etc. Hence, the consensus of the meeting was, in the first place, to urge EMB to mobilize schools to designate Dr SUN Yat-sen's birthday as a school holiday. He also instructed the LegCo Secretariat to refer the relevant proposal to the LegCo Panel on Education for consideration and follow-up actions.

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Secretariat

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