

**Extract of the minutes of meeting of the
PLC Panel on Manpower held on 22 December 1997**

IV Proposed arrangements for general holidays

(PLC Paper Nos. CB(1)537 and 680)

4. For the purpose of clarifying the Administration's proposed arrangements for general and statutory holidays, the Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DS/E&M) highlighted the following points :-

(a) While it had been agreed that 1 May and the Buddha's Birthday would be designated as new general holidays, it was the Administration's policy intent that the total number of general holidays in Hong Kong should remain at 17 days a year. As a result, the new holidays would need to be offset by the deletion of two of the existing six general holidays which were not also statutory holidays. Public views were presently sought on this issue.

(b) As a result of the inclusion of 1 May, the number of statutory holidays would rise from 11 to 12 days in 1999.

5. On the appropriateness of capping the total number of general holidays at 17 days a year, the DS/E&M pointed out that Hong Kong compared much more favourably than neighbouring countries as far as general holidays were concerned. He cited the examples of Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, China and Australia where the number of general holidays ranged from 7 to 16. The Administration was of the view that it might not be appropriate to increase the number of Hong Kong's general holidays, lest Hong Kong's economic competitiveness might be affected. Mr HO Sai-chu shared the Administration's view.

6. Members did not make any specific proposal on which general holidays should be deleted. Some members, however, pointed out that the public's preference for long weekends or several holidays in a row should be catered for. Others highlighted the need for an even spread of holidays throughout the year. The DS/E&M advised that the Administration was in the course of consulting employer and employee organisations, as well as the religious and financial services sectors. Members were assured that the Administration would consider public views carefully before reaching a decision.